

The Bible and Children in Pentecostal Christianity: A Case Study of the Children’s Ministry in the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA FIF)

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ABSTRACT---*The Bible plays a central role in the life of every Christian particularly in Pentecostal Christianity. Its centrality is also emphasized in the life of children. Parents in Pentecostal Churches feel proud to see their children excelling in Children’s ministry. Children are trained at a very tender age to memorize scriptural verses as part of socialization in the Christian walk. Therefore, it is the supreme role of the Children’s ministry teachers, parents and the Church at large to act as mentors. Most Pentecostal Churches like the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe, ZAOGA FIF, Family of God (to mention but a few) value the place of the Children’s ministry in exposing children to the Bible. Virtues such as discipline, honesty, loyalty and righteousness are regarded as important but can only be possible when children are nurtured in the world of the Bible at a tender age. Different age-groups have been created in the ZAOGA FIF’s Children’s ministry and teachers have been trained to specifically deal with such age-groups. However, critics have dismissed such socialization as part of indoctrination that doesn’t psychologically help children except to make them fundamentalist followers of certain leaders and their doctrines. This article will qualitatively look at the centrality of the Bible and the reading material used for Children’s ministry in grooming children in ZAOGA FIF.*

Keywords--- Pentecostal Christianity, ZAOGA FIF, Children’s ministry

1. INTRODUCTION

A number of scholars like Hastings (1996) and Shaw (1996) argue that, missionaries were unsuccessful in their attempt to Christianize Africa. Critics have also argued that, the Bible have not helped much in the empowerment of Africans in light of their environment. For Hastings and Shaw, the Bible has remained foreign to Africans in terms of its use and application. West (2004) begs to differ by positing that missionaries were successful in making Africans accept the Bible. This was echoed by Duve, Mbuvi, and Mbuwayesango (2012) who postulated that the “Bible has been read differently in the pre-colonial, colonial, during the struggle-for-independence, post-independence, neocolonial and globalization contexts”. Togarasei (2009) admits that he cannot even remember when he was first introduced to the Bible. All what he remembers is that he grew up as an African child who knew the Bible stories more than he could do on African stories or traditional folklore (Togarasei 2009). Togarasei’s statement clearly shows the extent to which the Bible has been used as a tool of socialization among Zimbabwean children. ZAOGA FIF just like the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe regards the Bible contextually as its basic source of inspiration, a rule of faith and practice. The Bible supplies the corrective and interpretative authority for all life experiences (Burgess 1988). For most Pentecostals, the issue of biblical authority is non- negotiable and is the starting point for the Children’s ministry especially in the way it is used to socialize children. Every assembly in ZAOGA FIF as well as the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe has the children ministry department; the scenario that one finds in most Pentecostal churches. Children in ZAOGA FIF are seen as equally important as adults. Duve (2002) observed that, Jesus presented children as the model of faith as well as the centre of God’s Kingdom (Mark 9:33-37 and Mark 10:13-16).

The official position of the ZAOGA FIF is that Children’s ministry is the innovation of ZAOGA FIF’s founder, Archbishop E. H. Guti (Dope 2012). Critics dismiss this as unfounded since the ZAOGA FIF founder was once a member of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe where children’s ministry was already in existence. Young children trained in biblical ways as per the expectation of the ZAOGA FIF church. Most Pentecostal churches are guided by

biblical texts such as Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it”. The philosophical understanding is that a child’s future behavior as a Christian is determined by the childhood orientation to the Bible. Togarasei (2009) rightly noted that many Christians highly regard the Pentecostal use of the Bible on everyday life. The Bible is the *sine quo non* (which you cannot do without) and *sacrosanct* (without which not) when it comes to Children’s ministry in ZAOGA FIF. It is used as the term of reference on meaningful insights and socialization of children. The Bible is given a central role in Children’s ministry where emphasis is put on the memorization of biblical texts. It is then not surprising that texts like: Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heaven and earth” and John 11:35, “Jesus wept” are so popular with children because of their focus on creation and the compassionate behaviour of Jesus towards people. Bible verses that focus on prayer and fasting are also popular in the Children’s ministry teachings. The Bible also helps Children’s ministry teachers to address the challenges faced by children because of peer pressure. Peer pressure adversely affects the growth of children. Peer pressure is exemplified as either negative or positive influence. Negative peers are repudiated, for instance the one found in 2 Chronicles 10:8-11 and 1 Corinthians 15:33, “Do not be deceived, bad friendship corrupts good manners” (Togarasei 2009). These two scriptures are commonly used in castigating negative peer pressure. It is not surprising to find children being encouraged to play and socialize with peers who go to the same church. Children are explicitly told that playing with wrong friends does not change the bad to become better but changes the good to become worse.

The understanding in most Pentecostal churches is that, any manners regarded as unorthodox, unbecoming and unruly are dealt with at the infancy stage through the Children’s ministry. The Children’s ministry provides a platform for children to be endowed with biblical knowledge. Ginott (1993) was right when he said “children are like wet cement upon which whatever falls on them makes an impression”. It is with this understanding that, Children’s ministry in ZAOGA FIF is an attempt to raise children in a dignified manner that helps them discover their purpose and potentiality in God. However, it cannot be refuted that such a scenario is aimed at producing children acquainted with Pentecostal Theology, the history of ZAOGA FIF and its founder. Selected biblical texts and church doctrines are part of spiritual diet given to children. The Children’s ministry is also known for boosting children’s confidence especially children with low self esteem as a result of several factors like: poverty, backgrounds of harassment and abuse. Children’s ministry came from an understanding that if children are not properly socialized they grow up being hostile to society. Children are introduced to Jesus Christ as the source of hope as shown when he said in Mark 10:14 that “suffer the little children come to me and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of God”. Jesus’ statement is taken as implying that, children have a place in church. Metaphors are commonly used to show the importance of children ministry in ZAOGA FIF, for example, when children are figuratively referred to as “Supu ye ZAOGA FIF” or the soup of ZAOGA FIF”. The metaphor implies the special anointing or unique behavior that characterizes children in ZAOGA FIF Children Ministry. Children’s ministry in ZAOGA FIF also wants to see children become more acquainted with the doctrine of the church which makes it easier for outside people to tell whether a child belongs to ZAOGA FIF or not. According to Kataya (2013), the metaphor “Supu ye ZAOGA FIF” emanates from the belief that “Archbishop E.H Guti has got a special anointing that he wants to see manifesting in children when they become successful in different facets of life.

However, others argue that the notion of “Supu ye ZAOGA F.I.F” metaphorically points to Children’s ministry as the fulfillment of the Archbishop Guti’s dream to raise “Young Ezekiels” like him. According to Dope (2012), the prophetic ministry is epitomized as a relay whereby Apostle E Guti can actually pass on the button stick to the Children’s ministry by equipping them with biblical teachings and church doctrine. The Bible is used as a tool of socializing children in the doctrines of ZAOGA FIF as well as appreciating the role played by Archbishop Guti in the growth of this indigenous Church. Children’s ministry is also used as a strategy for laying the foundation for tomorrow’s church, so that ZAOGA F.I.F does not die when the old generation goes. It is not surprising that books mostly written by its founder, E H Guti, are mostly used in teaching of the children. Critics argue that, the exposure of children to Guti’s writings is part of indoctrination of children by fundamentally making them become emotionally bound to Maxwell (2007). As a result the critics see Children’s ministry in Pentecostalism as a process of brainwashing children to useless doctrines that don’t contribute to wealth creation. However, ZAOGA FIF followers argue that, when one scrutinizes the methods and works of scholars like D Maxwell, one notices that, they are oriented towards the western superiority complex that tries to dismiss ZAOGA FIF’s efforts on orienting its children the biblical way as not authentic but a ploy of brainwashing and indoctrinating children. As a result Pentecostal Christianity is criticized of being exclusivist where they see themselves as “the” church (Gifford 2009). However, most of the interviewees drawn from ZAOGA FIF dismiss the above raised criticism by arguing that, in fact children in ZAOGA FIF are taught to imitate and emulate the life of great apostle Ezekiel Guti just as done by Paul when he encourages his Corinthian church to imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

2. CHILDREN’S MINISTRY AND HISTORY OF ZAOGA FIF

Children’s ministry in ZAOGA FIF draws its teachings from the history of ZAOGA FIF. Children are taught that ZAOGA FIF is the sacred ministry of God started in Zimbabwe by Archbishop Guti. In this regard, ZAOGA FIF has

been heavily influenced by Pentecostal Theology (Machingura 2011c) where emphasis is placed on the centrality of the Holy Spirit as in the days of the Apostles (Acts 2:1ff). ZAOGA FIF believes in miracles and baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues (*Glossolalia*). Emphasis is put on the features that define ZAOGA FIF thereby distinguishing herself from mainline churches. Children ministry in ZAOGA FIF has made children to know contributions made by the founders Archbishop E.H Gutu and Archbishop Eunor Gutu as called by God to build the Kingdom of God. Children are made to grow appreciating the role played by Africans in the growth of Christianity hence cultivating African pride and dignity in children if one considers what the colonial education has ostensibly done to Africa. Colonial missionaries' education curricula in Zimbabwe included the teaching of European Christian history, culture and mannerisms thereby denigrating African people. What is interesting is that, African people were oriented to submit themselves to colonial masters on the basis that they are inferior.

3. WHO TEACHES CHILDREN'S MINISTRY?

The ZAOGA FIF Children's ministry has teachers who work under the Superintendent. The aims and objectives of the Children's ministry have a slant towards the church's doctrinal teachings. The Children's ministry teacher is monitored by a superintendent and the superintendent also report to the pastor. Not everybody qualifies to be a Children's ministry teacher (Dope 2012). There are certain expectations that one has to meet for them to qualify as a Children's ministry teacher. The Children's ministry teacher must be a *bonafide* active member of ZAOGA FIF. If the person who wishes to be a Children's ministry teacher but having recently joined ZAOGA FIF, he or she has to receive some training on the teachings of ZAOGA FIF as a church. Usually the training is meant to make the teacher appreciate the history, development and doctrines of ZAOGA FIF. The Children's ministry teacher must be renowned for having a deep burden or love for children (Dope 2012). This requirement emanates from the fact that children need to be loved as showing our kids love is one of the biggest ways we can teach them to have confidence and self esteem. Research has shown that children, who don't feel loved get shy, nervous, lack confidence and usually don't perform well in schools. They have no sense of belonging which affects their feelings about themselves (Kendra 2012). Teaching in Children's ministry is not done any how but selective Biblical texts are drawn in a bid to mould children's behaviour towards a certain direction. The ZAOGA FIF Children's ministry teacher must have a sound doctrine of the church and this entails that the Children's ministry teacher must be in a position to explain concepts such as: salvation through Jesus, baptism in the Holy Spirit, the person and work of Christ. Besides trying to biblically equip children, the mushrooming of new churches have implied making children appreciate the doctrine of the Church. It is against this background that the Children's ministry teacher needs to be strictly equipped with the right church doctrine. The researchers noted that the language used varies from age groups and location. In most cases the mother language is used as mode of communication to children below six years both in urban centres and rural dwellers. However, in urban centres English is used as a mode of communication and it has been noted with concern that there is a risk of children loosing on the indigenous language and culture through the use of English. It is possible that, the use of English at home, in schools and in church make children not appreciate their indigenous languages as well as their identity as Africans. Children are taught according to set age-groups thought to be premised on the moral development of children.

4. ZAOGA FIF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY AGE GROUPS IN LIGHT OF THEORIES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Fawcett (2001) observed that human development is a complex intertwining of three identifiable processes: the biological, the cognitive and the socio-emotional components. The biological processes involve physical changes in individuals that include inherited genetic codes from parents, brain development, height and weight changes, motor skills, and hormonal changes throughout the life span. Cognitive processes involve changes in the way an individual thinks, gains knowledge and expresses that knowledge through language. Socio-emotional processes include those changes that describe the varied ways individuals build relationships with each other, develop and express emotions and develop their unique personality. It is in the knowledge of these developmental processes that ZAOGA FIF Children's ministry divided their children in various groups. Paradoxically, it should be noted that children from 0-6 years are ignored. Fawcett (2001) regards children at 0-6 as falling under the preoperational stage where children cannot reverse a reasoning process. The 0-6 years' stage is ignored in ZAOGA FIF because the child is not responsive and does not acquaint to labels of good and bad, right or wrong.

ZAOGA FIF possibly also not motivated or influenced by Kohlberg's analysis share some links with his theory of moral development where the first stage seems vital to ZAOGA FIF's teachings. Kohlberg was a moral philosopher whose special area of interest was the moral development of children especially how they develop a sense of right, wrong, and justice. Kohlberg observed that growing children advance through definite stages of moral development in a manner similar to their progression through Piaget's well-known stages of cognitive development. Kohlberg's observations and testing of children and adults, led him to theorize that human beings progress consecutively from one stage to the next in an invariant sequence, not skipping any stage or going back to any previous stage. These are stages of

thought processing, implying qualitatively different modes of thinking and of problem solving at each stage (Anon n.d.). Kohlberg came up with three stages with each of them having two social orientation stages: a) Pre-conventional-i) obedience and punishment, ii) individualism, instrumentalism, and exchange; b) Conventional-iii) "good boy/girl", iv) law and order; c) Post-conventional-v) social contract, vi) principled conscience (Harry n.d.) In the first stage of this level, children behave according to socially acceptable norms because they are told to do so by some authority figure, for example, parent or teacher. This obedience is compelled by the threat or application of punishment (Barger 2000). Children at this age know the rule "you scratch my back I'll scratch yours"(Kohlberg 1970). In Kohlberg's description, they have not yet attained the *punishment-and- obedience stage*. The general consensus is that they are not yet ready to be exposed to the church doctrine (Dope, 2012:4). The second level of moral thinking as observed by Kohlberg is that generally found in society, hence the name "conventional". The first stage of this level (stage 3) is characterized by an attitude which seeks to do what will gain the approval of others. The second stage is one oriented to abiding by the law and responding to the obligations of duty. The third level of moral thinking is one that Kohlberg felt is not reached by the majority of adults. Its first stage (stage 5) is an understanding of social mutuality and a genuine interest in the welfare of others. The last stage (stage 6) is based on respect for universal principle and the demands of individual conscience. While Kohlberg always believed in the existence of Stage 6 and had some nominees for it, he could never get enough subjects to define it, much less observe their longitudinal movement to it (Barger 2000). As a result, Children's ministry in ZAOGA FIF has targeted children aged between 6-10 (intermediate group) and 11-17 years (Young Generation Group). The children that range from 6-10 years are children who have graduated from juniors and are on their way to Young Generation. A momentous feature of this stage is the capacity to reverse actions. At this level, the children are known for being easily influenced by what they hear, read and see. For Dope, children at this stage have good memory on songs, poems, memory verses, names, events and being, able to separate well from bad. Morality is taken as the key to their success in life. The intermediate child is also very sensitive. They can tell whether the teacher or parents loves him or not. It is against this background that the intermediate child wants to feel accepted and recognized hence the need to be involved in many activities (Dope 2012). The intermediate group of children is at the stage when they are a vulnerable group thereby susceptible to forms of abuse like: rape, molestation and use of drugs. Henceforth it is very logical for strenuous efforts to teach this group on child abuse, violence and drugs in light of the biblical teachings.

The next stage in ZAOGA FIF Children ministry is that of The Young Generation group. The Young Generation group comprises of children who have graduated from the intermediate stage and are on their way to youth phase. The curricula at this level focus much on life issues like: drug abuse, sex and entertainment. The teaching materials also include Gospel movie DVDs and magazines which are employed. Resource persons are also conducted such as: popular Church leaders, Christian musicians, doctors, nurses and police officers to offer seminars on pressing issues like sexual abuse (Dope 2012). Discussing matters regarding sex are meant to empower children against sexual abuse. It has been noted with concern that the number of teenage pregnancies in Zimbabwean schools is disturbing if we go by the media reports, (Moyana 2013) in Sunday news of 24 November,(Dube 2013) in The Standard, of 29 September 2013, (Chimhete , Mbanje, Chibaya M 2013) in The Standard of 08 December 2013, (Kayeleye 2013) in the Herald of 01 November 2013 and (Ndou 2013) in the Southern Eye, on 07 November 2013). ZAOGAF.IF Children's ministry also uses Pamphlets from the Ministry of Health, NACP, Family Trust, WHO and other NGOs to orient children on a number of topics like: sexual abuse and the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Though such topics are part of ZOAGA F.IF Children's ministry, the researchers have noted that, children are mostly taught to abstain from sexual immorality. The doctrine of abstinence is important to guard against unwanted pregnancies, abortion, STIs and teenage pregnancies. It is against this backdrop that children are taught about the beauty of an organized Church courtship commonly known as "Sofa conference" (Musoni 2013). It is courtship arranged by Church elders when a young man has shown interest towards an unmarried lady. Relationships are mostly respected and encouraged if they involve church leaders as well as when prospective partners are all from ZAOGA FIF. The two are invited for a fellowship in the elders' house where in the process the elder will tell the girl that the young man is interested in her and they are given time to exchange words of love (Musoni 2013). Prospective lovers are discouraged from having courtship anywhere else except in the Church Elder's Home. Any conduct that doesn't involve elders in relationships is strictly not encouraged. Any relationship must involve the elders or leaders of the church for them to pray (a symbol of starting everything with God) and counsel those intending to join hands in marriage. It is Archbishop Guti's theological conviction that sexual immorality is one of the major downfalls of a Christian after any sexual immorality; the person would never be the same again. Children are urged to wait until they reach that age when they ready for marriage so as to stay safe from sexual immorality. The emphasis is on sexual purity as well as the protection of the girl child. Critics have however dismissed this type of socialization as highly sectarian and not helpful in properly preparing the youth and unmarried singles for marriage. The youth are always encouraged to marry from within the Church. The argument is that, the relationship is for the two lovers who must be given the space and privacy for them to know each other as their conduct at the elders' homes can be dramatized to impress the church leaders thereby failing to know each other before marriage. As a result some end up facing serious problems in marriage which they will not be able to solve as a couple without involving outsiders to their marriage. And this sectarian approach to marriage is common in white garment Churches (Machingura 2011b)

Therefore, the curricula of Children's ministry is not haphazardly done but organized according to ages and performance in the Children's ministry classes. Children in the same age group are further divided into smaller groups according to their interests. A trained teacher should be able to identify talents in these children and endeavor to develop as well as prepare them for stage performance on every Sunday church service. Those who are into dancing will be dancers and hence today we have ZAOGA dance group. Those who are into music will be developed accordingly. Since children enjoy entertainment as part of their hobby, ZAOGA FIF has introduced Kingdom Music and Dance group within the Children's ministry. The last group is of those who can memorize scripture verses whose minds are sharp to remember scripture verses correctly are also grouped in a separate. Over and above the children's ministry teacher will select group leader on the bases of their performances in those various groups. The premise behind this is that of setting pace-setters for other peers and at the same time instilling confidence for them to lead one another thereby grooming them for leadership roles. It has been observed by Piaget and Kohlberg that children mature differently and acquaint themselves to concepts differently. It doesn't matter they are of the same age. Children in the Young Generation group are taught important topics in career guidance to prepare them for the future.

Consequently the Children's ministry teacher has to measure performance of children. The performance of children is seen through capturing memory verses and elaboration on taught concepts (Dope 2012). The recitation of verses and their teachings is one of the incriminating evidence to show that the children have understood what has been taught. Children are supposed to be in a position to retell biblical stories especially the birth of Jesus, Jesus' teachings on love, baptism, righteousness and caring for those in need. The retelling of stories is a way of making biblical teachings sink into the minds of children. Furthermore, the performance of children is also seen through songs. There are certain songs that children are expected to know and the songs are derived from the doctrines of the Church. Children's ministry in ZAOGA FIF meets once a week. However, the meeting of Children's ministry children is not strictly confined to once a week; they sometimes meet during the week on special occasions. Apart from the Bible, books written by founder of the ZAOGA FIF, Archbishop E H Guti also play an important role on children, for example, teachings on the importance of prayer, obedience or respecting elderly people (Guti 2003). One of the most undisputed teachings propagated to children is obedience. Ephesians 6:1ff is the popular text selected for exhorting children to obey parents as obedience is taken as a commandment with a blessing as shown in Exodus 20:1. Original sin portrayed as having come into existence as a result of disobedience. It is common to find popular songs by gospel musicians on obedience being played as children learn. Henceforth Children's ministry in ZAOGA FIF has found it very fitting to teach children on the subject of obedience that begin by obeying parents so that they will also be in a position to respect church leaders. The issue of obedience is also reinforced by teachings found in books by E.H. Guti where he encourages children to obey parents (Guti 2003).

Children are also taught about the ideal Pentecostal mode of water and spirit baptism. Of notable emphasis in most Pentecostal Churches is that, children are also taught of the need for baptism in the Holy Spirit. The evidence of Holy Spirit baptism is speaking in other tongues and the gift of prophecy (Acts 2:1ff). This helps children to understand the need for baptism in the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit is the driving force. It is the spirit baptism that is highly regarded as an important mark of being saved. There are various benefits that are associated with spirit baptism (Machingura 2011a). The concept of the Holy Spirit is believed to have helped the Early Church grow. Guthrie (1981) adds that, "otherwise if the apostles did not receive the Holy Spirit, they would have done nothing for Christ's work". The understanding in most Pentecostal churches is that, baptism in Holy Spirit results in honest and obedient children. Being honesty is one of the virtues of morality. In this regard Biblical stories of Ananias and Sapphire are used as examples to inculcate that dishonesty results in severe punishment. Children are encouraged to do everything in their power and beyond to be honest. Roosevelt as quoted by (William 1961) argues that 'honesty is an important commodity that you cannot find among cheap people'. Joseph is given as example of someone who was very honesty and obedient when he refused to have sexual intercourse with Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:9). In this regard, hardworking, loyalty, honesty, humility and sexual purity are virtues that are encouraged and inculcated during Children's ministry lectures. It is against this backdrop that humility, purity and holiness are characteristics that are elevated in ZAOGA FIF. Children are encouraged to grow up pleasing both God and man. Children are expected to be diligent and hardworking. The teaching on being a hard-worker is expected of children in all facets of life, for example, education, household duties, school work and church duties.

5. DO PARENTS HAVE ANY ROLE IN THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY?

Parents play a momentous role in the process of spiritual development of children. The elders and every parent in ZAOGA FIF are expected to act as mentors to all the children fellowshiping in ZAOGA FIF. Every parent in ZAOGA FIF is regarded as having been called by God to properly groom all children in the word of God and Christian walk. A Stonehouse (1998, 25) reinforces this concept by stating, that "the orders of God are taught best in the normal flow of life", that is, the informal style of teaching where living life is the most effective and long lasting form of education. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is commonly used for admonishing the youth to read and follow it when it says:

⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; ⁵and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; ⁷and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The text is known as the *Shema* and is one of several passages that functions as a work up call for parents to train children on the Christian walk. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 has become the hymn of Family Builder's ministry in ZAOGA F.I.F. This ministry is a department designed to help parents on the nature of children in the Lord. Though Piaget dismisses this and argue that, parents sometimes can be obstacles to the moral development of children if they are allowed to interfere with the teaching of children. Piaget also criticized Durkheim for making teachers become priesthood of authority on the teaching of children on morality (Moran 1987). For Piaget, both teachers and parents face challenges on morality. Yet parents' role in ZAOGA isn't questioned as they are regarded as gate-keepers of morality who get guidelines from the word of God on how to rear their children in a Christian way. It begins with the command to love God with all that is within and to keep these truths in their heart. They are to make it a part of children's conduct by binding the written truth upon themselves and to include it in their daily life (Pazmino 2002). Parents and Sunday school teachers need not always agree on everything but are united on inculcating moral values in children as they grow.

6. REWARDS AS PART OF MOTIVATION

Children's ministry in ZAOGA FIF is known for awards and gifts which are given to children for an excellent performance. The awards are typical of the prize giving days known in most Zimbabwean schools. There are also other gifts given to children though not having any connection to their performance in children's ministry where children are given gifts during Christmas time. Some of the gifts are meant to cultivate certain traits in children. Christmas gifts are given as a way of demonstrating love. There is also the Orphanage Destitute Care Fund (ODCF) where children are encouraged to contribute some funds towards the welfare of the destitute and orphans. As a result, children in ZAOGA FIF work relentlessly to reach what is called the red carpet. The red carpet is a stage whereby a child would have met the stipulated amount of money and given any opportunity during Annual Leadership conference to have a hand shake with Apostle Eunor Guti. This award is a cause of concern in Children's ministry as some critics have argued that it gives children prides especially those who would have achieved the set targets. A certificate is given to every child for reaching the red carpet stage. Critics have further highlighted that, awards are nothing more than feeding into the Pentecostal prosperity gospel where children are socialized at a tender age to understand and appreciate such a gospel of sacrificial giving without questioning it. Examples have been given of most Pentecostal Churches' followers who give sacrificially to the church at the expense of their family needs with the hope and trust in God that, a return or net gain would be rest assured.

Apart from the red carpet, children are also given some incentives in form of gifts or money. This is whereby some gifts or moneys dispatched to excellent students in Children's ministry. For a child to get an award, he or she must have met the set objectives. The awards encourage children to read the Bible on daily basis. There are certain verses that a child in the Children's ministry is supposed to master. Children who recite a lot of verses are rewarded with a motivational gift. Besides capturing memory verses, retelling of selected biblical stories is another criterion employed for a Children's ministry child to get a reward. Children who can fully articulate select biblical stories stand a chance of getting an award. Children who receive awards will work hard to maintain the tempo even when they become adults and leaders of the same church. On the other hand those who do not receive awards will also work diligently so that they will get awards in due course. The ZAOGA FIF leadership and the majority of followers who were interviewed argued that, awards positively help nurture children on all important church doctrines like that of giving and the role of God in their lives. Children who contribute immensely in ODCF will find it easier to work 'talents' and even create wealthy for themselves as well as the nation at large. Children are groomed to be innovative as they grow and prohibitive environments. Children grow with a mindset of being creators of employment and not servants. Pastor Sajeni (2013) of Bindura ZAOGA Church who happens to be a Children's ministry Pastor confirmed that, Children are groomed in the knowledge of the Bible and Church doctrine by awarding them gifts for capturing the essence of the subject matter. Children's ministry in ZAOGA FIF is not rigid but flexible.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted how ZAOGA FIF is nurturing its children in the knowledge of the Bible and the History of the Church. Emphasis is on making children get acquainted to the knowledge of how: ZAOGA FIF started, its founder and its doctrines. ZAOGA FIF is one of the Pentecostal churches that have successfully rooted its children in its doctrine so much that even if they encounter new doctrines they always remember and cherish the teachings they received whilst

they were young. It is clear that, ZAOGA FIF takes children as the future of the church hence the concerted thrust to conceptualize them on the Bible and the History of the Church. By exposing them to the doctrines of ZAOGA FIF, the goal has been set to make them appreciate, defend and remain loyal to its teachings. It is therefore not surprising from the foregoing discussion that ZAOGA FIF builds in children as its faithful followers who will withstand any teachings that are different from their Church. This has on the other hand been criticized by critics as the in breeding of fundamentalist followers who cannot think outside the set box.

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