



21st Century Dads

by Wole Akinkumi

As a dad of 3 children, I have been watching teenagers with keen interest. Honestly, every move they make deepens my interests and curiosities. I'm learning fast...especially considering the fact that I have 'up and coming' teenagers under my roof. I marvel at their great potentials in our church community and on the streets.

On another note, it breaks my heart whenever I see breaking News on TV, "Another teenager knifed or shot" Shame isn't! Already some people are getting used to that. Count me out! I don't want to get used to this folly. Could it be that our local and national family units are breaking down?

The dawn of the 21st century presents new challenges for prospective dads. Suddenly dads have to deal with issues which our parents never encountered whilst raising us up. Consequently, the family unit is feeling this sudden change like a "blow to the head". This is resulting in some families being dysfunctional as some dads struggle to cope with the challenges they were presented with; some are adjusting and coping with their new environment. Some are becoming non-resident dads and some are totally deserting the family unit, leaving the mothers to raise the children.

This article is not criticizing fathers but written to inspire us dads to take our place in the family unit, which is to lead the family as Christ would have us do in his time.

Some Basic Antidotes for Dads

Dads and Babies

As babies grow older, many come to prefer playing with their fathers who provide unpredictable, stimulating, and exciting interactions. This stimulation is important because it fosters healthy development of the baby's brain and can have lasting effects on children's social, emotional and intellectual development. Infants with involved dads tend to

score higher on Test of Thinking skills and Brain Development. A study found that baby boys whose fathers engaged in physically playful, affectionate and stimulating plays during infancy were more popular at school.

• **Golden Nugget** *"It doesn't matter who my father was, it matters who I remember he was."* ANNE SEXTON.

Dads and Toddlers

The dads' influence on emotional development is not limited to play, but also comes through direct interactive teaching. Studies have proven that when fathers are physically helpful, their children are more likely to get on well with their brothers and sisters. When dads are emotionally involved the children tend to have better relationships with other children and behave less aggressively. A father's involvement in his young children's care can even last well into the child's adulthood.

• **Golden Nugget** *"Blessed indeed is the man who hears many gentle voices call him father."*

Dads and Children of Primary School Age

Dads can have an impact on the academic achievements of their children if they are involved and interested. Usually, this results in the child becoming intellectually developed. The reason for this could be that they tend to transfer better mathematical skills to their children. In one study, four and five year old boys scored higher in math's test when fathers encouraged skills like counting and reading. Even if the father is not strong in transferring other skills, this achievement in mathematics is likely to increase the child's self esteem so much that it encourages the child in other areas of his or her schooling, therefore resulting in better academic achievements overall.

Moral development is another area that fathers have a major role to play. This is done by providing guidance and direction. Children whose fathers are involved were more tolerant and understanding and engaged in more socially responsible behavior than those with less involved fathers.

• **Golden Nugget** *"The greatest gift I ever had came from God, and I call him Dad."* UNKNOWN AUTHOR

(This will be continued in the next edition)