**Love and Control as tools in bringing up children in the way of the Lord.**

Love and Control work hand in hand as twin brothers. No child can do without love. A child you do not love, you cannot control and a child you have no control over, you cannot claim to love. Your children need your unconditional love. Some parents believe that you don’t show a child too much love or you spoil him. But it is the foundation for a successful training. The Word of God says: Charity suffers long, and is kind; charity envies not; charity braggs not itself, is not puffed up (I Corinthians 13:4).

What can spoil a child is love without control. Every child needs a combination of both to be a successful adult. Whatever a child ends up being in the society is a function of the training he receives at home, and part of that training is in the area of control. God has given human beings natural desires, but when those desires are not controlled, they lead to abuse. As parents, your responsibility is to ensure that your children learn to discipline their natural desires.

Control, also means the ability to apply disciplinary measures to correct misbehaviour. I have observed that women generally like to say when a child does something wrong, “Your father will soon come, just wait for him.” But if you cannot discipline him or her when his father is not at home, you are failing in your responsibility.

God’s Word says: Love is very patient and kind…. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out (1 Corinthians 13:4,6). When administering the instruments of discipline, remember that love is patient and kind. When disciplining your children. Do not allow discipline to degenerate to child abuse. Always let your children know that you love them and that your reason for disciplining them is because of your love for them. It is important for you to know that children are very sensitive, so if your actions and words do not portray that you love them, they will doubt it even if you say it.

Therefore, it becomes mandatory that you do these two things: -

Develop a relationship of mutual trust with your children: Let them know you trust them by admitting your mistakes when necessary and asking for their forgiveness, if need be. Never be too proud to say, “I am sorry” to your children when you have made a mistake …Do not irritate and provoke your children to anger…. But rear them tenderly in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Encourage them to confide in you, just as you confide in them. Treat them as people and not as inferiors; this will help their self-image.

Always demonstrate your love: The Lord Jesus, who is our perfect example, demonstrated His love for the children when He rebuked His disciples for turning them back. He said: Let the children come to me ! Never send them away! For the kingdom of God belongs to men who have hearts as trusting as these little children’s. (Luke 18:16). Then he took the children into His arms and placed His hands on their heads and He blessed them (Mark 10:16).

This is an example of how to show love to your children. Take note of the following in the above scriptures: The Lord Jesus carried them and laid His hands on them. As a parent, learn to carry, hug and kiss your children. Touch your children, and let them touch you in return. The Lord Jesus is not an high priest that cannot be touched. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched… (Hebrews 4:15). Also He blessed them. Ensure that you compliment your children. Remember, your words are very powerful and your children will become what you say about them.

A wise man once said, “A torn jacket is soon mended; but hard words bruise the heart of a child.” This means that if your children tear their jackets, they can be mended; but if you abuse or speak hard words to them, you bruise their hearts and the “tear” in their hearts is much more difficult to amend than their torn jackets! So, be careful what you say to your children!