

BIBLE'S IMPACT ON MODERN YOUTH CULTURE OF READING***Virgilius Kawama**

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Abstract

A lot of questions are being raised about today's youths and their love for Bible. The general view is that the modern youth culture is more and more getting reluctant in embracing the Word of God in most of their dealings. This running away from the Bible by the youths prompted the author of this article to think deeply, contemplate unceasingly and ponder heartily on the future consequences the present situation entails. The author believes that what we do today has a great influence on how our tomorrow is going to be. Having worked with the youths as their chaplain for ten years, the author vividly believes that a large percentage of the modern youths have no culture of reading the Bible, not only in the Church but also in their homes. This situation brings about all sorts of challenges that are difficult to help the youth grow into adults with a vibrant faith, proper spiritual development, and understand the truth as portrayed by the scripture. This article, therefore, wish to handle the topic, "*Bible's impact on modern youth culture of reading*". Its objectives are: To clarify reasons why the youth have lost the culture of reading the Bible; To state the future consequences the present situation of the lack of love of the Bible by some youths entails; and, To find out the impact of the Bible on the modern youth culture.

Keywords: Bible, Impact, Modern, Youth, Culture, and Reading.

INTRODUCTION

A lot of questions are being raised about today's youths and their love for Bible. The general view is that the modern youth culture is more and more getting reluctant in embracing the Word of God in most of their dealings. This running away from the Bible by the youths prompted the author of this article to think deeply, contemplate unceasingly and ponder heartily on the future consequences the present situation entails. The author believes that what we do today has a great influence on how our tomorrow is going to be. Having worked with the youths as their chaplain for ten years, the author vividly believes that a large percentage of the modern youths have no culture of reading the Bible, not only in the Church but also in their homes. This fact is also reflected in Maurice Owinyo's statement that, "No one can argue against the affirmation that the widespread availability of the Bible in Africa does not necessary translate into its readability. Many people may possess the Bible but few may actually read through it but still a number among them fail to understand what they read."¹This situation brings about all sorts of challenges that are difficult to help the youth grow into adults with a vibrant faith, proper spiritual development, and understand the truth as portrayed by the scripture. This article, therefore, wish to handle the topic, "*Bible's impact on modern youth culture of reading*". Its objectives are: To clarify reasons why the youth have lost the culture of reading the Bible; To state the future consequences the present situation of the lack of love of the Bible by some youths entails; and, To find out the impact of the Bible on the modern youth culture. Experience shows that the use of the Bible by the youths have changed over the centuries.

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¹Maurice Owinyo, "Reading the Bible: An Art in Narrative Reading," *Bible and Orality in Africa: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, Albert Ngengi Mundele, Emmanuel Wabanhu & Jean-Claude Loba Nkole, eds., (Nairobi: BICAM-CEBAM, 2021), 150.

Owinyo observed that, "There are incidences where the Bible is kept as a charm or because it is a fashionable thing to do. It is the equivalent of the many Catholics hanging rosaries in their cars which they end up never reciting."² The faithful are ready to buy the Bibles but how often they make use of them is highly questionable. The findings indicate that other sources of spiritual life, especially the online programs, for the young people have become more attractive than reading the Bible. In line with the objectives of this article, the author will talk about the following subtopics; the Bible, the modern youth culture's reluctance of Bible reading, the importance of Bible reading for modern youth's future, the impact of the Bible on the modern youth culture, and the way forward to promoting youths' love for Bible reading. Regardless of the disturbing situation we find ourselves in as far as youths' love for the scripture is concerned, the author argues that the Bible can play a significant role in the education and proper growth of the youths.

The Bible

The Bible is a collection of different books written by different authors from various perspectives of God's presence among people and how He intervened in their daily life experiences. The Bible was not written within a day or a year but composed over a good period of time. In some way we could confidently say that the Bible is a historical book covering various phases of human development. And we cannot rule out the importance of these historical stages that brings out the value of the Bible. Richard Baawobr will say that the:

Knowledge of the historical context is helpful to appreciate the full power of some images used in a story. However, beyond

²Maurice Owinyo, "Reading the Bible: An Art in Narrative Reading," *Bible and Orality in Africa: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, Albert Ngengi Mundele, Emmanuel Wabanhu & Jean-Claude Loba Nkole, eds., (Nairobi: BICAM-CEBAM, 2021), 151.

the historical context the story challenges each person to reconnect with his or her personal story, to share it with others and to attain the fullness of life to which God calls us, in and through Jesus, as we journey towards him.³ In addition, “the Bible tells the story of human kind and his concrete experiences. It is a story of tradition revealing the present. The past speaking to us in our present setting based on real historical event rather than concepts.”⁴ The fact that these Holy Scriptures are titled ‘Bible’ and bound under one cover bearing a single title, it does not make the Bible a single book but remains a collection of books that reflects how people lived in their different periods of existence. The uniqueness of the Bible is that it is not only a library like any other library we find in schools or homes, but a library of sacred books. Their sacredness is due to the fact that they are written under divine inspiration. The Holy Spirit influenced the human authors. Their writings were entirely their own work and entirely the work of God. Making the Bible both divine and human, and this fact should help us be at home with it, if not for anything else, at least for its human face. The Catholic Church regards the Bible as the Word of God, a source of revealed doctrine and a part of the rule of faith. Apart from the tradition, which is the living teaching authority of the Church, as it has existed from its foundation by Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church receives her faith from the Bible. The Bible contains the history of God’s dealings with the world and His people. It is in the Bible that “God’s Word informs us about God, about ourselves and about the world. He did this in different ways in the past through the prophets and finally through Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2).”⁵ God’s divine actions as found in the Bible are made present to us through men who received special grace for this purpose and made use of them accordingly.

Modern youth culture’s reluctance of bible reading

Modern youth culture is a way of living as it is being influenced by different factors in play in the here and now. It is how the youths understand themselves, what they believe in, and how they choose to live their lives. The changes in youth culture have affected negatively their ability of reading, understanding, relating to and engaging with the scripture. The following influences the reluctance of the modern youth in Bible reading:

What the youths go through

They undergo a lot of stress, tensions, frustrations, and crises; they experience turbulent psychological, physiological and spiritual developments; they go through strained relationships with family, peers and wider society; they have poor educational and professional prospects; and they are uncertain about their future. These individual and communal youth experiences seem not to find answers from the Bible. In the midst of all these difficulties, some youths seek sincere love,

understanding and proper guidance. This love and guidance the youths seek have not been provided by the Bible to the youths’ satisfaction. Some wonder why they should continue reading the Bible that does not provide answers to their struggles. This lack of fulfillment in their daily endeavors act as a motive for many youths to abandon God and His word. They move their focus from the reading of the Bible for life solution to searching what suits their new way of life. This new way of life is aimed at survival at all cost with less concern about the already childhood established Christian values. They are not very much interested in Biblical but in modern answers to their contemporary challenges.

Youths’ image of the bible

The Bible for some youths is an ancient or out-dated book; it is difficult to read and understand; it is irrelevant to their current daily life challenges; the inaccessibility of the Bible to some youths due to high prices; the boringness of the Bible while reading it in a sense that it is the same Word that was read previously being repeated; some youths do not just know how to read the Bible; there are also those youths who do not enjoy reading anything; and that, those who have a culture of reading the Bible have not helped their fellow youths much to see the connection between reading the Bible and living the best life with Jesus Christ. Some youths prefer to lead an isolated lifestyle that does not permit them to attend Church activities such as youth groups’ Bible sharing that could create good opportunities for their health spiritual growth.

Youths’ lifestyle

The youths’ lifestyle is constructed through social processes such as families, markets, schools, businesses, televisions, videos, computers, internet, printed and unprinted media, and other enticing environments, rather than the Bible. They shape youth culture by being the source and contexts through which the ideas and values of life are made visible. These are the ideas and values of the world some youths know better as compared to the world preached by the Bible. It is what the youths go through at a daily basis that changes their distinctive way of thinking, living, doing and talking. The change taking place is what results in what we are calling modern youth culture in this article. It is through their modern youth culture that they express their convictions and their collective identity. We see this youth culture being expressed through their unique language and slangs, clothe styles like damage trousers or spaghetti, tattoos or body marks, music styles, films and televisions shows.

Youths’ experiences inform their truth

There is a shift in youth culture of understanding the truth. Today’s youths are growing up in a world where their experience informs their understanding of what is true. The truth for them is no longer found in the living Word of God alone. Mostly gone are the days when the Word of God took precedence over any idea one might be having about the truth. Today’s youths are uncomfortable with the suggestion that the Bible is a Word of God that leads us into truth. They feel the Bible put so many conditions that restrict them from exercising their freedom by putting down what they should do and should not do. They forget that God’s inspired Word is timeless, powerful, truthful, and the way that God has chosen to tell us how to live in our present world for our own good. The

³ Richard Kuuia Baawobr, “Orality and Memory in the Bible and Africa: Narrative Criticism at Work,” *Bible and Orality in Africa: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, Albert Ngenji Munde, Emmanuel Wabanhu & Jean-Claude Loba Nkole, eds., (Nairobi: BICAM-CEBAM, 2021), 24.

⁴ Maurice Owinyo, “Reading the Bible: An Art in Narrative Reading,” *Bible and Orality in Africa: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, Albert Ngenji Munde, Emmanuel Wabanhu & Jean-Claude Loba Nkole, eds., (Nairobi: BICAM-CEBAM, 2021), 155.

⁵ Richard Kuuia Baawobr, “Orality and Memory in the Bible and Africa: Narrative Criticism at Work,” *Bible and Orality in Africa: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, Albert Ngenji Munde, Emmanuel Wabanhu & Jean-Claude Loba Nkole, eds., (Nairobi: BICAM-CEBAM, 2021), 19.

modern culture can never give us the truth as the Bible does. No matter the truth the modern culture provides, tomorrow will be challenged by another truth. St. Augustine being aware of this fact, he confessed that, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."⁶ If the one who created us cannot give us the absolute truth, where else can we find it? Until we find the truth in God's Word we will continue being restless. The Bible is full of truth. To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn. 8:31-32). Truth is another aspect of God's character that shows itself throughout the Bible. The Bible is ultimately where truth is found. The youths should learn to ask God to show them His truth when they read the Scriptures.

Youths' culture of immediacy

The youths have developed a culture of immediacy in most of their dealings. And the immediacy culture is not very much at home with God's ways of handling issues. Our God, as portrayed by the Bible, is very comfortable with slow and patient approach to life situations. This is an enormous challenge when approaching Bible reading, the youths find it better to read the media or the world that provide immediate answers to their queries rather than the Bible that asks them to wait up to God's time, God who is very comfortable with His time, slow and patient about anything, never in hurry but takes time to act. The youths seem to be very much at home with immediacy culture, they have no time to waste but only time to compete with. The youths have not known a world where almost everything takes time to be realised, but only the here and now world.

Youths' wrong approach to bible reading

Some youths are reluctant to read the Bible simply because they find it boring. The Bible is too big to be read, some stories take longer time to be understood, while other information is found to be irrelevant in their current situation. This feeling could possibly be as a result of wrong approach to the Holy Scriptures. The youths take the books in the Bible as one book and not as a library where you simply need to choose the book that speaks to you according to what you desire to deal with in your life. Joe thus writes:

When we understand the Bible as God's library, it changes our approach to how we are to read and understand its writings. We would never go to a library assuming that we are supposed to begin reading the first book on the first shelf and progress to the last book on the last shelf. Nor would we suppose that all of the books in a library are to be understood and read in exactly the same way or that all are the same type of literature. Once we learn how to use a library, we are capable of accessing the power of its contents. In the same way, once we learn how to use God's library, the Bible, we will be able to access the mighty power of its contents.⁷ What the youths need to counteract their Bible reading reluctance is a new understanding on how the books in the Bible are written and their different approaches to different peoples' challenges. They may not need to read the Bible in a whole but choose

books or chapters that speak more to their present life situations. What is relevant to one youth cannot automatically be relevant to the other youth just because the information is found in the same book of the Bible.

Youths' vital figures bad example

Parents as well as the Church elders attitude towards the Word of God is also related to the youths' reluctance in Bible reading. The few youths who read the Bible and are ready to be of service in the House of God grow up with parents and among the elders who spend time to read the Bible. This is because some youths are like children who learn by observing what others are doing. If the youths see their elders reading and walking with the Bible, some of them could be motivated and start doing the same. As families, there is a need to read the Bible together so that in their young age the youths could develop the love for Bible reading. When the family is able to share their faith with the children as enlightened by the Word of God, children will be able to relate their daily experiences with some people found in the Bible. The parents and elders should be courageous enough to emphasize what the Bible says on different life issues in such a way that in the future the youth will not wait for an elder but search by himself or herself from the Bible the solution to challenges.

Importance of bible reading for modern youths' future

From the book of Hosea we read that, "My people perish for the lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Lack of knowledge of the Bible can be very destructive; it can lead to loss of lives and cruel deeds. The youths who read the Bible are more likely to be good adults. The modern youths need to be aware and know precisely the importance of Bible reading culture, its obvious consequences on their future life, how what is currently happening among them could shape their tomorrows' way of life, and how the Word of God could exactly give them a clue as to where their present lifestyle is leading them. They need to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by their modern culture in the light of the Bible, and to embrace those incidences with courage, faith and hope. The youths are to think critically and contemplate sincerely on the importance of Bible reading, and be courageous enough to dig deeper of the future consequences of reading the Bible. The lack of the culture of reading the Bible raises some worries on the future of today's young people. The youths who read the Bible to a larger extent are more likely to be faithful adults. The reading of the Word of God helps the youths to grow up as not only good Christians but also excellent Catholics. This is because the biggest factor predicting their future spiritual health is the reading of the Bible. For Donald and John, "The rich diversity of the Bible is one of its glories because it allows the story of God's people to be told from various perspectives. It also presents a challenge to the reader who should be aware of the different cultural, historical and literary contexts of each Biblical book."⁸ The Bible's richness should be both a challenge and consolation for the youths who are found in today's unique environments. Through reading the Word of God, the youths could discover that, in fact, what they are going through today is nothing completely new but something people of the past have gone through. And so, they can easily get some insights on how to handle their present conditions to

⁶ Dan Sloan, "Our Heart is Restless until it rests in you – Augustine," retrieved from <https://www.crossroadsinitiative.com> (accessed October 9, 2023).

⁷ Joe Paprocki, *God's Library: A Catholic Introduction to the World's Greatest Book* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2005), 9.

⁸ Donald Senior & John J. Collins, eds., *The Catholic Study Bible (2nd edition) New American Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

become better human beings in the future. Through the Bible, the faith of our spiritual role models like Abraham, Moses, Job, Mary, John, Peter, and Jesus are passed on to the youths. The motivation of this passing on of faith is to see our ancestors' faith be embraced and be made their own as youths. The author is aware that the youths may not always know how to make the faith expressed in the Bible their own, but with time and constant reading of the Word of God, one day they would be able to apply what they read from the Bible in their daily life, thus making the faith of our ancestors real. The youths will then see the connection between reading the Bible and living the best life with Jesus.

Talking about his personal experience, Joe Paprocki reports that:

The Bible has been a powerful influence in my own life and in the lives of countless numbers of people. Not only is it the story of people who lived thousands of years ago, but it is also the story of your life and my life. Every Bible story is a metaphor for the many experiences of God we all have had and will have in our lives. So as we prepare to look at burning bushes and parting seas, at the calming of storms, the healing of blind, deaf, and paralyzed people, and the raisings from the dead, know that somehow these experiences are part of our story.⁹ As Joe has stated, by reading the Bible, the youths are being helped to understand better the experiences they have already had, and yet, at the same time, they are being prepared for what they are likely to encounter in the future. The reading of the Bible therefore prepares the youths for their future life. And since they are well prepared, they will handle their future events of life with wisdom and confidence. The more often the youths engage the Bible, the more bold they will be in sharing and growing in their faith. Since their faith will increase as a consequence of reading the life histories of the great figures found in the Bible, the youths are likely to experience the following in their future life: feeling of loneliness will drop; anger issues will be dealt with less or no bitterness; conflicts in relationships will be taken as normal occurrence for different people living together; some vices like abuse of alcohol and sex outside marriage will reduce; and spiritual stagnation will seldomly experienced. This is because, normally, there are profound differences between people who engage the Scripture and those who do not engage with the Word of God in their life. The reality is that with a lack of consistent Bible engagement, the youths have less confidence in themselves and are more vulnerable to falling prey to false teachings or some modern vices that seem very enticing. Donald and John reports that, "Each of the biblical authors, no matter how much separated in time, culture, and literary style, shares a conviction that God's presence is felt in human history and that God invites the human family to respond with faith and integrity."¹⁰ With no knowledge of the Bible, the youths will not be able to respond to their life conditions with faith and integrity. This is because the Bible or God's Word is like a map that provides guidance and direction for those who reads it, accepts it and applies it in their life. God's Word shows us the way to go and the way to avoid in life. When we are lost, it is there to guide us back to the right path. And once we are in the right path, the Word of God shows us the way to maintain our lane, to remain faithful and steadfast so as not to go astray

⁹ Joe Paprocki, *God's Library: A Catholic Introduction to the World's Greatest Book* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2005), 9.

¹⁰ Donald Senior & John J. Collins, eds., *The Catholic Study Bible (2nd edition) New American Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

again. The beautiful thing is that God's Word is eternal and changeless, always true and relevant. It is a firm foundation that the youths can rely on, no matter what happens in their lives. When the youths know God's wish for them through reading of the Bible, they are able to avoid falling in sin as compared to those who do not read the Word of God. Terence will say that:

Bible reading is a dynamic process in and through which the Holy Spirit can open us up to new possibilities of meaning that move beyond those with which we may be familiar. The openness in the text itself will foster more new insights, give more room for the play of the imagination, encourage deeper conversation, and provide more avenues in and through which the Word of God can address people in ever more diverse communities.¹¹ The Word of God when properly read and assimilated has a capacity to offer us free counseling, to give us hope, to grant us freedom, to bring us comfort in affliction, to make us examples to others, to sustain us in hard times, to give us wisdom and understanding, to protect us from falling into the enemy's trap, and to help us know the true character of God. The reading of the Bible helps the youths in their growth to Christ like by shaping their Christian faith and practice. It helps them grow in the knowledge of who God is, what he is like; and who Christ is, what he demands of them. This is because the Bible:

Functions as a standard to which appeal can be made. Christians will appeal to the Bible to determine what they should believe and do in a sense in which they would not appeal to any other document. Christians will rely on the Bible to feed and nourish their spiritual life in a way in which they will rely on no other book.¹² No matter how much good things the modern world can offer the youths, cannot be compared to the Bible. It is only the Bible that can give them general guidelines that are applicable always regardless of time, place or person. The youths should always appeal to the Bible for their spiritual, psychological and moral life solutions. The Bible is capable of teaching the youth show to be faithful to God, what should influence their daily lives, self-worth, self-esteem, and relationships.

Reading the Bible is very vital because it will help the youths not to repeat the mistakes of our ancestors in their future life. The avoidance of the past mistakes recorded in the scriptures simply confirms the fact that:

The Bible has a formational or constitutive role in and through the work of the Holy Spirit. It has a unique capacity to mediate God's Word of law and Gospel, which can affect life and salvation for individuals and communities. The Bible is also a fundamental source for shaping and maintaining Christian self-identity. We turn to the Bible to discern what Christian faith essentially was and still properly is, and what the basic shape for Christian life in the world essentially was and continues to be.¹³

¹¹ Terence E. Fretheim, "The Authority of the Bible and the Imaging of God," *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture*, William P. Brown, ed., (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 52.

¹² William Strange, *The Authority of the Bible* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 2000), 104.

¹³ Terence E. Fretheim, "The Authority of the Bible and the Imaging of God," *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture*, William P. Brown, ed., (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 47.

This reality help us understand why things are the way they are and discover the different aspects of human nature. The Bible teaches lessons about individual and group behaviour, the cause and effects attached to these behaviors. Through the Bible we are able to learn what people have tried before, why they tried it and if it worked or not. All these helps us to plan better our future, to lead a Christ centered and Bible-based life.

According to Terence:

The Bible is the basic, but not the only, vehicle for God's work among us. We are called to use it in such a way as to bring to the world not a word about the Bible and its authority but a word about God. Indeed, people can use the Bible in such a way as to obscure this word by, say, making the Bible center of attention. The Bible is used appropriately when it points beyond itself to God.¹⁴ This is because it is God through the Bible who provides guidance and add purpose to our life by telling us who we are, what to do, why we should do what it says and how to do what it says. By having faith and practicing it as God specifies it, we are assured of the better future because God's Word truly is what changes lives. If the youths of today are to help their future young ones understand the Bible as truly God's Word, they have to first model a life of being formed by God's Word themselves and remain faithful to their on-going spiritual formation. In the Bible, the youths will find practical wisdom for life, how to live the way God wants, and the information that will help them as they figure out how to be good parents, how to have successful marriages, how to approach their work, how to care for family members, how to forgive, how to love, and how to lead a Godly life. The Bible gives practical principles that will help the youths in their daily life. Knowing the Bible is critical to having a relationship with God, oneself and others. Reading the Bible is how you learn who God is, how He interacts with and cares for you. The Bible contains God's message about life, work, and all the things that give your life meaning. The Bible holds knowledge, truth and hope for everyone.

Impact of bible reading on modern youth culture

St. Jerome, a Father and Doctor of the Church, gave a strong exhortation to Christians urging them to pay attention to serious scripture study, insisting that, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."¹⁵ Truly, if the youths are not in touch with the Word of God, if they do not read the Bible, as they should be, we do not expect them to know Christ as the scripture portrays Him. It is unfortunate that, to a larger extent, their modern youth culture is more influenced by what they read and understand from the media and not the Bible. The Bible has less impact on the modern youth culture and this is not very good for the future of our young people. The author believes the youths cannot know well Jesus Christ if they do not read the Bible. The youths are supposed to be lovers of the Word of God, daily live the Word of God in their lives, allow the Word of God be their light and the joy of the Lord be their strength. The youths should understand and accept the fact that the world no longer read the Bible directly but reads the Bible through the life pattern of the Christians, for which they are

part. The impact the Bible has on the youth, in some ways determines the impact of the Bible on the society.

Joe Paprocki brings to light the fact that:

The Bible was not written for scholars; it was written for you and me. The Bible is God speaking to you and me in the course of human events. It is meant to be read not only in churches and universities, but also in subways, at bus stops, in the cafeteria, in a rocking chair, in bed, or listened to on tape or CD as you drive. Sure, certain aspects of the Bible may seem intimidating, but when you stop to think about the fact that the creator of the universe has something to say to you, it makes the notion of learning about the Bible a little bit more enticing.¹⁶ The youths should develop the habit of reading the Bible at all times. Thank God media has made it easy to have access to the Word of God. You may not need to move with your hardcopy Bible but soft copy is available in our phones. We have fewer reasons to give as to why we do not read the Bible. The reading of the Bible should be strongly recommended if it is to have a positive impact on the modern youths' culture. Reading of the Bible should be a daily practice if the spiritual life of the youths is to flourish and be Christ like. The Bible should be read with good will, with humility and in a spirit of prayer. The materials included in the Bible are useful for modern youths who want to transform their current conditions and see their culture with the eyes of faith. Anthony encourages the youths that:

Besides getting themselves informed about popular sports, music or film stars, the youth, for their spiritual growth and with a view to imitating them, should also interest themselves in hearing about the great Biblical heroes of old like Abraham and St. Paul who patiently persevered in doing the will of God, and were subsequently blessed by God.¹⁷ It is important to have role models in life, and for the youths, getting one character from the scripture can be very transformative.

The impact of Bible reading on the modern youth culture finds its consolation in the fact that:

The power of the inspired Word of God is that it has been relevant to hundreds of the past generations and it does retain its power through the Holy Spirit to be relevant to us today and forever. God's Word in the Bible will offer a guidance and help to the youth today when they have attentively listened to that word, absorbed its values and applied these values as the will of God to their concrete life situations.¹⁸ Despite the vices of the modern youth culture, some of the youths enjoy the graces and blessings offered by the Bible from generation to generation. Because they have listened to God's Word attentively and lived it, their life continue experiencing transformation and facing the challenges of their modern culture with easiness.

Way forward in promoting youths' love for bible reading

For every challenge has a solution, the author believes that there is hope for the modern youths to develop love for Bible reading again. It is just a matter of time:

¹⁴ Terence E. Fretheim, "The Authority of the Bible and the Imaging of God," *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture*, William P. Brown, ed., (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 47.

¹⁵ Robin Cheung, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ: 1st Sunday of Lent (Year C). Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation," retrieved from <https://slmedia.org> (accessed October 7, 2023).

¹⁶ Joe Paprocki, *God's Library: A Catholic Introduction to the World's Greatest Book* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2005), 8.

¹⁷ Anthony Iffen Umoren, *The Origin and use of the Bible in the Church* (Abuja: Vinria Printers & Publishers, 1997), 56.

¹⁸ Anthony Iffen Umoren, *The Origin and use of the Bible in the Church* (Abuja: Vinria Printers & Publishers, 1997), 55.

Every people have their own way of interpreting the Bible and this will not always be the same with the changing times. Behind the so called fixed state of words we read a multitude of other processes that have been at work adapting and readapting the text into the thought form and language of the culture of the day.¹⁹ The youth to change their attitude towards the culture of reading the Bible only needs to be reminded of the powerfulness and impactfulness of the Bible. The youths need to accept the fact that the Bible has stood the test of time. That even their time will come to pass while the Word of God will remain. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Mt. 24:35). This word of Jesus Christ has proven true. The Bible is just as applicable today as it was in the past. This should be the motivating factor for the youths, to love what is permanent and to avoid being misled by what is temporal like the modern culture, which is on transit.

Bible reading and youth's attitude

The youths' modern culture has negatively affected the love for Bible reading. To promote good youths attitude towards Bible reading, there is a need for creation of a conducive environment that nurtures the faith of the modern youth and provides solutions to all sorts of challenges that prove themselves difficult in allowing the youth grow into adults with a vibrant faith. The youths need to lead a life of being formed by God's Word, and be determined about regular on-going spiritual formation programs that favour their psychological growth and spiritual development. There are various challenges faced by parents and pastors in dealing with the modern youth culture. In the past, parents and pastors, or leaders in different institutions like universities, were constantly encouraged by their culture to treat the youths as if they were little children or their own babies. This is no longer applicable. Most of the youths are ready to face their parents or those in authorities as their equals. This attitude is damaging their growth, including their spiritual development. It is affecting the truth of the Gospel, which is supposed to be passed down from generation to generation in order to grow as one family in the Body of Christ. There is a need for the youths to change their mindset and start tapping from the fountain of wisdom enclosed in the elders' experiences. The parents and elders on their part, should not resolve to giving up their duties and responsibilities towards the youths by helping them to grow spiritually in their formative years so as to equip them and to let them make a good impact for Christ in the present and future moments. In many ways, though not in every way, the nurturing of the faith of the young people is getting more and more difficult today. The modern youth culture does not favour much their Bible knowledge and basic beliefs that could have reduced the involvement of the adults in their faith growth. Since the youth culture does not entertain much the reading of the Bible, it remains up to responsible adults to infuse right knowledge in the heads of our current youth. Unfortunately, the youths are also extremely isolated from their elders or rarely do they spend time with those who belong to different generations. That brings all sorts of challenges with it that are difficult for more experienced elders who want to help teenagers grow into adults with a vibrant faith. Some elders are very much willing to support the youth in their life

of faith but the distance between the youths and elders makes it almost impossible for the dream to be realised. There is a need to bridge the gap to allow the youths and elders come together and facilitate the culture of Bible reading. The best, undiluted and purest guidance the youths deserve is found in the Bible. What the youth need is to develop the culture of reading the Bible, in it they will definitely find the guidance, support, and consolation of their daily life. The youth will find reasons to be rooted in the Bible teaching and develop irresistible desire to reach their Godly given full potentials. They will understand modern lifestyle influences on Christianity to allow them build meaningful relationships with God. This is because the Bible shows what God's will is. From the letter of St. Paul to the Romans we read, "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect" (Rom. 12:2). Through reading of the scriptures, the youths will come to understand and appreciate the Word of God, be transformed and aligned in their thoughts with God's thoughts.

Bible and youth's role in church

Just like any other person in the Church, the youths have a role to play in the mission of Christ Jesus. Service in the Church for young people cannot only prepare them to become future leaders, but also allow them to contribute to the Church in the here and now. This is seen many times in the Bible, as God often used young people to do great things. For example, God used Timothy to pastor and lead the Ephesians Church when he was young. The scripture reads, "Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). Love for the Word of God will influence the youth positively and be eager to read the Bible, which in turn will enlighten their minds and hearts to understand that God expects them to be full participants in the building of Christ's Body, which is the Church. This will ginger them to grow in their self-esteem as they play their roles in the House of God, to grow in their relationship with the Lord, and to prepare themselves to serve Christ in all they do so that the Church can flourish. The Bible explains how to share the Gospel. It reports, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19-20). The Bible gives instructions for how to share the Gospel with others. The verse quoted above is called the Great Commission, and it is one of the last statements Jesus made to His followers. After hearing Jesus' command, they preached in churches, shared about Jesus with strangers and taught people from all backgrounds about Him. If the youths are to be good Christians and missionaries to one another, they have to learn how to share the Gospel and to live out the Great Commission in their lives. It is the youths' role in the Church to make disciples. But since they cannot give what they do not have, the starting point should be for the youths to fall in love with the Bible for divine inspiration in their missionary work.

Bible and youth's value in church

The Bible presents the facts that there is much to be learned from the faith of a child. As St. Matthew reports, "He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like

¹⁹Maurice Owinyo, "Reading the Bible: An Art in Narrative Reading," *Bible and Orality in Africa: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, Albert Ngengi Mundele, Emmanuel Wabanhu & Jean-Claude Loba Nkole, eds., (Nairobi: BICAM-CEBAM, 2021), 157.

this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 18:2-4). With the reading of the Bible, the youths will discover how much God value them and would like them to be better people and agents of his mission. Once they are aware of their value in the Church, the youth will embrace a responsible way of viewing the Bible, adopt better manners of conversation and develop appreciative self-image. The Bible has the greatest influence on the life of the youths. Through Bible reading, the youths come to an understanding of their world, themselves and God. The identity, character and spiritual formation of the youth can be nurtured and cared for by the Word of God. This is because the books of the Bible describe the different characteristics of God in a way that humans can understand. They present God’s goodness to humanity and how His Word could be made alive in individual life patterns. For the youths to enjoy reading the Bible, to let it sink in their minds and transform them, they should try to make themselves characters of the Bible so that God can speak to them personally.

Bible and youths’ education

The Bible can play an important role in youth education. The moment the youths accept the importance of the Bible in their education the more they will come to love it and use it as a tool to their holistic education. The youths will need to make Bible sharing part and parcel of their daily life if they are to discover its marvels. They will need to make themselves more flexible and humble enough as they join any Bible sharing group in the Church, and accept the fact that Bible sharing is for everybody, young and old, wise and foolish, intelligent and dull. Through Bible reading in various platforms the youths will discover Biblical guidelines and gain a better understanding of the modern trends of lifestyles. Utmost point is that group gatherings must be safe spaces where questions about the Bible can be asked; where youths can come to an understanding of God, of themselves and of others in a light of God’s spirit; and where life issues can be discovered in a responsible way. In order to become their conducive space, youth Bible meetings must choose not to be judgemental on the observable behaviour of one another with regard to Bible knowledge and its usage in their daily life, but make an effort to get some understanding of the world which constitutes the norms and values behind this behaviour. A more effective way of facilitating this engagement within youth groups is through dialogue. It is better to engage in serious conversation among the youths, rather than prescribing to them what to do. This means that all the parties involved in Bible education should be acknowledged and taken seriously. The youths should view one another as equal human beings in the House of God. There is no youth who is less human or less Catholic. Nobody among them should be treated as objects in this conversation by only being on the receiving end of information. In this space the stories of every youth need to be listened to and appreciated. This interaction and acknowledgement of one another as equals can also meet the need of youth to belong and be appreciated for who they are. Some of the reasons for the lack of sufficient education on youths’ spiritual matters include parents’ lack of enough knowledge of the Bible; parents’ unwillingness to talk about sensitive issues; parents’ fear of giving incorrect answers to their children’s questions; parents’ perception that Bible education is a task of the catechist or priest; parents’ frequent absence from their homes; parents’ limited knowledge of modernity; and parents’ poor communication with the youths. From these reasons, it looks evident that parents need assistance in raising their children in

the life of faith. The faith community can play a vital role in educating and assisting parents in their tasks as spiritual leaders of the youths. The expression of their Bible knowledge could be a major contributor to youth Bible knowledge. It is true that the Church can never take over the responsibility of the parents but needs to support the parents’ role as primary educators of the youth. A partnership between the faith community and the parents is needed to address the Bible education of the youth.

Conclusion

Cultures are learned and shared. The context in which a certain culture develops and lived needs to be taken into consideration. Today’s modern youth culture portrays something of the broader society in which they live. In a modern era, the youths make choices in terms of individual preferences. They construct their own world by the selection they make from the huge variety of choices that are available. These choices are also made in relation to personal fulfillment and emotional happiness, of which, Bible reading culture seems not to provide. The author observes that the modern youth’s culture of reading seems not to pay much attention to the Word of God but to other sources of joy. Notwithstanding, he still believes that the Bible can become a more relevant and effective partner in fostering an environment that promotes moral and spiritual growth of a modern youth. Consequently, he urges the youths to make more effective use of various platforms that promotes the use of Bible in order for them to have a clear meaning of their lives. He also encourages Christ-followers to trust that the God who always reveals himself to His chosen people will meet the youths at the appointed time and in their specific environments. The author recommends that the youth should be provided with some training in form of workshops and seminars for them to know the proper approach on how to read the Bible. The youths should be motivated to develop interest in daily Bible reading, if not, then create a youth Bible sharing day in a week, not forgetting the importance of the Sunday Bible sharing for the whole Catholic community before the Eucharistic celebration. Every parish or Catholic community should endeavour to increase Bible apostolate by producing or buying Bible manual, create Bible group, support Bible radio programs, facilitate Bible networks, and encourage Bible reading before the beginning of any meeting. The Church should try all possible means that facilitates holistic youth formation and make the youths realise that they are bearers of hope in the Church; they are a blessing, and a heritage of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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