

# Family Cleaning

Cleaning is one of those key behaviours we adopt to maintain a safe environment and healthy lives. I've been to communities where everyone took responsibility for the maintenance of communal spaces. Groups of young men took turns to clear village arenas and paths to local water holes or streams. Growing up in the Anglican Church, I was aware of times when members of the Mother's Union organise for the cleaning of the church sanctuary. Yes, my mum was a key player in the Mothers' Union, so I know.

My mum was so fastidious about the state of our home to the point that if she feels a grain of sand under her feet within the house, she will demand that the place be swept promptly. The kitchen must be sparkling clean before she cooks. In the days of no mechanical dishwashers everyone became proficient at the task. She has not waned even at age 94! My dad had a special drycleaner that made sure all his clothes were washed and ironed razor sharp. We the children are all grateful for the discipline in cleanliness our parents instilled into us.

There is another housecleaning that really got my attention. Jacob was a man with a mandate that called for deep cleaning of his household. His family and the entire redemption plan of God was under threat after his sons brutally massacred the people of Shechem. God told him to return to Bethel to dwell and build an altar to Him. Jacob's first response was to cleanse his household.

Let us consider a five learning points from the cleansing of Jacob's family in Gen 35:1-4: "And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them

under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem."

1. Jacob promptly set his mind to return to the place of encounter with God and to dedicate himself and his family to the worship of the true God.

2. He said to his people "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves": As a father, Jacob woke up from his passivity and led his family's spiritual return to God. His family got right with God after he did! Whatever your stance is with God will reflect on your children. Children are in better stead to get right with God when the heads of households take the lead.

3. Do what I say and not what I do is a fool's lesson. The conducts of parents either acts as a licence or a permission for the children to do the same or even worse. Jacob's children emulated their mother in keeping foreign gods because Rachel their mother clung to the household idols of her father (Gen 31:19) while Jacob remained too passive to lead in righteousness.

4. "And change your garments": This was significant because "Throughout the Bible, garments symbolize character. The inward life of the unregenerate is compared to a polluted garment." (Barnhouse) "Jude 1:23 says: "...but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh." Ephesians 4:22-24 also exhorts: "...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

5. "And the earrings which were in their ears": Even the earrings had pagan connections. Great lesson for families today. That someone appears on a billboard, or on Television or movies with a particular piece of jewellery or attire does no sanctify it for us to emulate.

## Family Cleaning

Arise my friends and take stock of what you may have in your home that is ungodly or occultic, and promptly get rid of those things. The items might include demonic objects you picked up as “works of art” on your travels to “exotic” places or from antique shops. Search through the eyes of The Holy Spirit. Let the search go down deep into our walk with God. Make sure no one in your household is left behind.

“Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.” (Hosea 10:12)

Happy cleaning!

Your co-labourer,

Chuks Aniereobi.