

# A Ministry to Street Children of Joubert Park, Johannesburg

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Our cities, especially those in developing countries like South Africa, have become hives of straying children. Joubert Park, Johannesburg, is one of those suburbs clogged by street children with nowhere to go at night or during cold weather. The street children, most of them aged thirteen to sixteen, fall victim to crime.

**Problem:** Most street children are found to be driven under the influence of substances and drugs of different kinds. The children turn out to be a problem in the city streets, and they are at risk of being kidnapped or killed. Several of these street children were once arrested for shoplifting or other such notorious cases.

**Purpose:** This article aims to develop a ministry intervention to rehabilitate and restore street children in Joubert Park, Johannesburg. Children on the streets can then be rescued and placed in shelters, where continuous intervention is used to restore them to everyday life.

**Discussions:** The issue of children born into a world of pain and subjected to stress and suffering has a Biblical expance from creation. Longman and Garland suggest that “the judgment against the woman relates to her children and her husband. She will now bear children in increased pain or toil.”<sup>[1]</sup> The pain is not an end in and of itself. The pain continues even as the children grow up; the pain exists from generation to generation, all because there is a child to be born. As they grow, these children happen to cause more pain to the family. It also affects the community and the society at large. Though cursed and banished from the Garden of Eden, humanity suffers, and their turmoil is not final; in verse 16, God also brings happiness.

According to Longman & Garland, “the pain of every birth is a reminder of the futility of the fall; they are a sign of an impending joy.”<sup>[2]</sup> Children, though their arrival is painful, are also coupled with joy. *The promised joy of the coming of the redeemer is also mentioned in the same passage, ‘and you shall bruise His heel.’ After much struggle, the woman’s seed will defeat the serpents. Victory is guaranteed after all the pain and the struggles. Scholars like Kaiser Jr. suggest that “most surprising of all, however, the male child of the woman’s ‘seed’ would strike back by crushing the head of the Serpent. This, of course, will be a lethal blow.”*<sup>[3]</sup> This view is not generally accepted. While the victory is futuristic, it is in this victory of the woman’s seed that the human race’s conflict shall end. Hence, support for the liberation of women’s seeds is fascinating.

**Findings:** Street children in cities like Joubert Park and Johannesburg are a severe concern for municipal management and city businesses. Organizations and institutions around the city need to attend to the street children. Churches and companies need to be involved; building more shelters and homes for street children is ideal for now.

Street children must be rehabilitated to adjust to real life and removed from the city streets. Rehabilitated street children need continuous intervention to safeguard against relapses. Governments and private organizations can assist by planning for the street children when they are reunited with their families or communities.

**Keywords:** Ministry, Street children, Childhood and Family, Methodology, PTSD.

## DEFINITIONS OF KEYWORDS

Ministry is a function that involves giving of ourselves, our time, talents, and resources to bless and help others.

Street children are children who have abandoned their homes or have been abandoned by their families, schools, and immediate communities before they are eighteen years of age and drift into nomadic street life.

Childhood is the state or period of being a child and remaining dependent on another person.

A Family is a group of one or more parents and their children living together.

PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a disease that affects one's attention, especially school-going children.

## A MINISTRY TO STREET CHILDREN OF JOUBERT PARK, JOHANNESBURG.

### Background

This article presents a ministry for street children in Joubert Park, Johannesburg. According to Brodie, "Surveyor-General Johannes Rissik and head of the Mines Department, Christiaan Johannes Joubert, were accompanied by Veldkornet Johannes Petrus Meyer, the government official in charge of the area when they went riding from farm to farm to complete their initial survey."<sup>[4]</sup> Brodie is corroborated by Johnson and Jacobs, who ascertain that "Settled in 1886, Johannesburg has its roots in the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand, the area surrounding Johannesburg. This city takes its name from the two commissioners, Johannes Rissik and Christian Johannes Joubert, who confirmed the discovery of gold in the area."<sup>[5]</sup> Since then, Johannesburg has become a great city of gold and many other minerals in the region and the African continent. The city continues to attract many different people: workers, migrant workers, and, unfortunately, homeless children and street children.

This research emanated with a mission to save street children in Johannesburg who have given themselves to drugs and substance abuse. The street children have either run away from home or were kidnapped and brought to Johannesburg; now, they are left to make ends meet as they try to live a better life in Joubert Park, Johannesburg. The situation of children in the streets can also be linked to the behavior of their parents or guardians. "A survey conducted by researchers at the University of Washington found that ninth-grade children whose parents supervised their drinking at home were more likely to have used marijuana than kids of parents who did not permit it."<sup>[6]</sup> So, while the parents can be blamed for leading their children into wrong behavior, the unfortunate thing is that some children are now on the city streets like Joubert Park, Johannesburg, and elsewhere. This article aims to expose the challenges faced by street children in Joubert Park, Johannesburg.

The research presents the following Biblica perspective: ministries to the children in the Old Testament, which covers children's role and training in the Old Testament Times and God's intended purpose for

children of all ages. The children in the settings of the Hebrew culture, involvement of the ministries to the children in the New Testament, which covers parents bringing children to Jesus, children and the disciples of Jesus, ministries to the children in the writings of Ellen G. White, ministries to the children in our modern times and a summary.

## DISCUSSION

### Ministries to Children in the Old Testament

The Old Testament represents scriptures and passages about children; we find that ministries to children happened due to the labor and challenges at the time. Hence, some scholars argue that; “Many of these texts emerged out of conflicts, struggles, or crises, in which the people of God were engaged with the constantly changing and challenging tasks of articulating and living out their understanding of God’s revelation and redemptive action in the world.”<sup>[7]</sup> Where there have been struggles, conflicts, and challenges about God’s justice, the mission was born. Be it the mission to rectify and correct lifestyles, the people began a ministry. The New King James Version, Genesis 3:15-16, records that; “The Lord God told them: ‘I’ll multiply your pains in childbirth; you will give birth to your babies in pain. You’ll want to please your husband, but he’ll lord it over you.’” Childbearing and its consequences were used to introduce pain. The parents had to deal with the complex struggles of raising children.

The record about children and the plight of children in Genesis 3:15-16 is not an end to this conflict. But somehow, it is the beginning of the mission of saving humanity. American King James Version states, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). Further, the text mentions, “unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain, thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3:16). The picture painted in these verses has since not been changed, there is indeed enmity between the devil and the seed of the woman. Childbirth is still a painful process. When children are growing, they continue to bring pain and suffering to their parents.

The whole scene is subjected to Satan’s will, causing pain and suffering to the family. But also, the prophecy, as predicted, “God predicted that the Serpent would bruise the heel of one of the woman’s “seed,” a male descendant from among her offspring.”<sup>[8]</sup> The scripture is prophetic; it also presents challenges that children bring with them at birth and following the children’s growth in every family.

In another passage, Genesis 37:3 “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors.” Scripture introduces a young man, Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, the Patriarch. Joseph received all the love from his mother and father. The life of Joseph took a turn when his brother became jealous of him; they then plotted to kill him, and they later sold him to the Egyptian traders.

Nevertheless, Joseph held on to the teachings of his father. As a child, Joseph cherished his father’s teachings about the value of being a faithful child of God. Hence, we see Joseph rising from the pit to the Egyptian palace on a mission of God, although they were unaware of it. Neither his parents nor his brothers knew anything about the mission of God. Wright records that “Joseph was sent (unwittingly at first) to deliver people from oppression and exploitation (Ex. 3:10).”<sup>[9]</sup> Many of the children found themselves away from home. Still, sometimes, the very children became the breadwinners of their families. The scenario fits well in the life of Joseph, Moses, Daniel, and Esther. They were all enslaved while they were children from their homestead. And were given other people to raise them. What kept these young people intact was the teachings they received as children.

## Children's Role and Training in the Old Testament Times

The children in the Old Testament were considered precious gifts from God to the parents. They played a distinct role and were also trained in a manner that brought honor to the family name. "Not a good start, being taken prisoner by an invader and ending up with other children as part of a despised ethnic minority in an enemy land?"<sup>[10]</sup>

Even though there were challenges, White says that "in Eden, Satan used the serpent as his instrument. Today, he uses the members of the human family, striving using every species of cunning and deception to hedge the path of righteousness cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in."<sup>[11]</sup> This evil system presents itself in diverse manners. Hence, the study of this nature focuses on the structures of the relationship.

In the case of our first parents, some scholars, Donald J. et al., suggest that; "Travail would now characterize man's genealogical development, and the reinstated marriage relationship would be disturbed by sinful inclinations to abuse of its authority structure."<sup>[12]</sup> The evil one, the nature of sin to human inclinations, and the existence of sin threaten these structures of the family and marriage. Some of these predispositions, dispositions, and proclivities resulted from giving birth to children. The behavior of Adam and Eve's children brought pain to their parents; their disputes ended in the death of Abel, leaving Cain wandering in the land without anyone to look after him. The introduction of children comes with pains; their existence brings pain to the parents and pain when the children pass away. The presence of this pain continues to the very end, till the coming of the promised Deliverer, the seed of the woman., Carter argues that "children were a sign of God's blessing (Gen. 17.6; 28.3; 49:25; Psalm 128.3-4). Sons, particularly, were a 'heritage' and a 'reward.' Children become a blessing to others, witnesses to their faith, and 'messengers' of God."<sup>[13]</sup> The Bible records several heroes as being called while they were children or at birth. Sometimes, God gave directions on how the children were to be raised. Old Testament children were of great help to the whole plan of salvation. They participated in advancing kingdoms, and God used the children to build communities and preserve the future.

The following passages record the lives of children who were called in their early childhood: "Samuel's life recorded in (1 Samuel 1.11, 20; Judg. 13.3-5; Isa. 44.24; 49.1; Jer. 1.4-6) and as belonging to God from the womb (Ps. 139. 13-16; Jer. 1. 4-6) and as belonging to God's voice the child Samuel becomes the messenger of God to attack lax living (1 11Sam. 3.1-18)."<sup>[14]</sup> In Judges 13:3-4 the birth of Samson is recorded, "Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or *similar* drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." How these children were born indicated that God was in charge; almost all the children born away from home were set aside by God.

Leaders who were called and used by God included children like Moses (Exodus 1. 22; 2.1-10), a young slave girl who became a missionary. Naaman is cured of leprosy and praises God, silencing the enemy (Ps. 8.2)."<sup>[15]</sup> Children or childhood is a blessing. Children give their hearts wholly to the Lord early and can serve God fully.

## God's Intended Purpose for Children of all Ages.

God's original purpose for children of the ages is recapitulated clearly in the prophetic passages of Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The reference to Immanuel refers to the presence of God amongst the people. A God who cares enough to come down and settle with the people. Petersen says, "This image of

God,” enabled our first parents to be in community with Him, live in a harmonious and loving relationship, and connect closely with the Creator.”[\[16\]](#) A God who dwells amongst the people is the creator God, the almighty God of all humanity.

Petersen further suggests that; “He is the God who calls Himself Immanuel; that is, He is with us in all our circumstances. No situation exists that He will not step into and be involved. He is present.”[\[17\]](#) God’s intended purpose for his children is to dwell with them and reunite the link since Eden. He is a God who is willing to be with his people. He is a present God through all life’s challenges—a God who is willing to heal diseases from his children.

### **Children in the Settings of the Hebrew Culture**

The Hebrew culture passed some excellent values to their children. Some values have been shared in the Bible; Proverbs 1:8-11 records, “My child, obey the teachings of your parents, and wear their teachings as you would a lovely hat or a pretty necklace. Don’t be tempted by sinners or listen when they say, “Come on! Let’s gang up and kill somebody, just for the fun of it!” Teaching and learning formed an important component in the growth and development of a Hebrew child. “Schooling was among the most binding obligations of a father to his son, and originally, the father was his child’s teacher.”[\[18\]](#) Teaching or education had an essential purpose.

Vamosh argues that the most critical value of the school is to train the children to know and understand the Torah or the law. Vamosh substantiates that “children learned to read Torah at five. At ten, they began the study of the oral law, commentaries of the sages on various Biblical passages. Because these were the days before the invention of vowels in Hebrew, students had to listen intently to their teachers to catch the correct pronunciations of every word.”[\[19\]](#) The fact that education started quite early suggests that society had a set of behaviors and norms that were highly esteemed. This meant that there was an education system in the Hebrew culture.

In Hebrew culture, it was important for children to listen to their parents; it was behavioral conduct taught at home. “The child was warned against joining in activities of a professional gang of robbers and murderers ... The gang holds out to the young person the attractions of life of adventurers, comradeship, and easy money.”[\[20\]](#) Such teachings were indoctrinated into the lives of the young people as a way of trying to prevent them from becoming evil characters, which may eventually lead them out of the way of God.

Scholars Barton and Muddiman further explain why children should avoid such behaviors: “Their crimes are self-destructive, and they are their victims. Like a senseless bird that swoops down to the baited trap, these men are oblivious to all signs of their danger and plunge mindlessly to their destruction.”[\[21\]](#) Children were protected from committing foolish mistakes and expected to conduct themselves proudly in fear of God’s judgment.

### **Involvement of Children Ministries in the New Testament**

The New Testament is paraded by several instances that prove children were involved in the mission and the ministries. Almost all the gospel writers recorded situations where Jesus honored the children. Mark 10 fully narrates what happened when parents brought their children to Jesus for blessings, and some objected. Jesus rebuked them and instructed them to get the children to him.

Nevertheless, the gospel of Mark prefaces all other gospels; therefore, it is more reliable to investigate an account of Jesus in the New Testament. “Our first written Gospel was produced about thirty years after Christ’s crucifixion.”[\[22\]](#) Hence, this study also focuses on the book of Mark, which contains the passage

about parents bringing children to Jesus, recorded in Mark 10:13-16.

the passage on marriage may have been prompted by the fact that the two subjects naturally are linked in life.”[\[23\]](#) This view is also shared by Witherington III, who says, “The material in roughly the first half of Mark 10 deals with family matters including marriage, divorce, children and the effect of discipleship on According to Hurtado, in Mark 10:13-16, “the appearance of this passage dealing with children right after family obligations and possessions as well.”[\[24\]](#)

Accordingly, “the transition from speaking of marriage in the preceding verses to speaking of children is also a natural connection, as is the connection between women and children as powerless persons.” Therefore, Jesus was intentional in teaching and breaking the barriers of separation that existed among the communities. Hence, we hear Jesus reinforcing in these passages. “Let the children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God.”[\[25\]](#)

Accordingly, the approach used in the passages interprets grammatical constrictions and historical contexts about the original recipients and genre. It is a method by which writers bring the reader’s linguistic, grammatical, literary, historical, socio-political, archaeological, economic, and religious information about the passage.

According to the local newspaper, Joan van Niekerk commented, “We are a damaged society that needs to be healed and to be able to break the cycle of violence. We’ve seen a large number of cases of violence against children in South Africa and men and women who are violent to children.”[\[26\]](#) This unprecedented scenario paints a gross picture of the abuse of children in our cities. Children have fallen prey to those who claim to be their protection. Children are denied comfort at home and freedom in public. Children are seen as a nuisance to the public. Children are compelled to accept the unpleasant circumstances around their living spaces.

### **Parents Bringing Children to Jesus.**

Mark 10:13 introduces people who bring children to Jesus. Harvey says, “On this occasion, the adults brought them to him, evidently to obtain his blessings: it was commonly asked of a religious teacher.”[\[27\]](#) These adults are deemed parents or guardians of the children brought to Jesus. Whoever these people were, leaders, parents, or even guardians, wanted Jesus to bless the children. Nevertheless, Jesus used the opportunity to teach about the importance of children.

Beavis suggests that the passage in Mark 10:13-16 “returns to the theme of the status of children in the community (cf. 9:36-37,42), underlining the theme of children as paradigmatic for the reign of God”[\[28\]](#). This passage was a link to the teachings of Jesus, including marriage, divorce, and the kingdom of God. Another significance is that “Rabbis were known to lay hands on children and bless them. The children in this incident could have been anywhere from infants to twelve years old.”[\[29\]](#)

Whether Mark was intentional or not, mentioning those who brought the children to Jesus is unclear. At that moment, the important thing about this scenario was Jesus’s response. Jesus arrests the moment; he immediately takes the platform to teach and instruct those around Him. Nevertheless, with a stern rebuke to the disciples. Mark 10:14-15 accounts, “But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said to them, Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” In verse 14, the Greek word used for anger is “*aganakteo*,” Jesus was not happy about the behavior of his disciples. Hence, in verse 15, Jesus clarifies the requirements of entering the kingdom of heaven using the illustration

of childhood.[\[30\]](#)

Church leaders are supposed to be mindful of their duties regarding children. They are not supposed to discourage the children; they should encourage and allow them to express their feelings. Children's leaders can do so by counting the stock.

### **Children and the Disciples of Jesus**

The disciples seemed unhappy about those bringing the children to Jesus. They were discontent and unappreciative of those disturbing the master. De Vries purports that "they rebuked not the children, of course, but their parents and in general all who brought them." The disciples were filled with rage, bitterness, and regret that the children and their parents interfered with Jesus's duties.

Hendriksen further mentions that "the reaction of these disciples was rather characteristic of them: they did not want to be bothered; also, they did not want their Master to be bothered by such unimportant creatures as infants."[\[31\]](#) Hendriksen suggests that the disciples were not for the idea that the children should be brought to Jesus for a blessing.

As a matter of consideration, Keck suggests that "once again, this behavior shows that the disciples do not understand the point of Jesus' teaching."[\[32\]](#) Keck notes that the disciples did not favor the children being brought to Jesus for a blessing. Jesus's attitude to the disciples affirms this. Jesus reprimands their behavior; for Jesus, it was an opportunity to teach more about the mission he came for. Jesus clarifies the need for repentance and being like children. This attitude called for Jesus' attention, and he responded with a rebuke. Jesus rebukes the disciples who forbid children to come to him, and Jesus then begins to teach about the children and the kingdom of God. In Mark 10: 14-15, it is recorded, But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belonged the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.

Jesus's reaction to the disciples was a stern rebuke. The word used in this translation is 'indignant,' meaning vexed, outraged, annoyed, or angry. So, what made Jesus angry was the attitude of those who rebuked the children. Jesus "[*was much displeased*]" This feature is peculiar to St Mark. Lately, the Lord had expressed His love to little children in a very remarkable manner (Mark 9:36-37)."[\[33\]](#) Subsequently, Jesus took an opportunity to instruct and teach about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus seizes an opportunity. He does not rebuke the disciples and then become silenced but rebukes and instructs. There is an element of causality, causation, or causativeness. Everything that happens is caused by something and has a way of being connected to something else. Moreover, children and their parents are from one family, so Christ completes the picture of a family destined for heaven in his speech. At the same time, he uses an opportunity to instruct the disciples about being courteous.

### **Ministries to the Children in the Writings of Ellen G. White**

The pen of inspiration through her servant, White, was one of the pioneers in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Her role in the church is still highly esteemed. According to White, "I said that I did not claim to be a prophetess. I have not stood before the people claiming this title, though many called me thus. I have been instructed to say, "I am God's messenger, sent to bear a message of reproof to the erring and encouragement to the meek and lowly."[\[34\]](#) Ellen Gould White is referred to as the church's prophet, whereas she refused the title; she preferred being called a messenger of the church.

From the writings of, e.g., White, the church is rich with information about how to care for and minister to

the children in the believer's homes. White suggests, "If you bring Christ into the home, you will know good from evil. You will be able to help your children to be trees of righteousness, bearing the fruit of the Spirit."<sup>[35]</sup> The home environment determines how the children will maintain themselves in the future. If the children are well taught in their homes, there could be less trouble in the homes of the Christians. White further explains, "Teach the children and youth to respect themselves, to be true to God and principle; teach them to respect and obey the law of God. These principles will control their lives and will be carried out in their associations with others."<sup>[36]</sup>

White records that "I have seen a mother whose critical eye could discern anything imperfect in the matching of the woodwork of her house, .... and would carry it through frequently at the expense of physical and spiritual health, while her children were left to run in the street and obtain a street education."<sup>[37]</sup> Parents are cautioned not to lose focus when caring for their children. Children who are not watched closely will likely drift away into the streets.

It is the responsibility of the parents to keep guard so that the children don't fall victim to manipulation. White further says, "The children, having nothing to do when not in school, obtain a street education. From evil associates, they acquire habits of vice and dissipation. The parents see all this, but it will require a sacrifice to correct their error, and they stay where they are until Satan gains full control of their children."<sup>[38]</sup> The parents' work protecting children from the streets is crucial. If anything happens to the children, the parents must accept the responsibility.

White's view on children says that "upon all parents there rests the obligation of giving physical, mental, and spiritual instruction. It should be the object of every parent to secure to his child a well-balanced, symmetrical character."<sup>[39]</sup> White's view then forms the ideals and ambitions of church members. Most members aspire for their children to have a better character. All because the parents have tried to shape their children's character. A character that will take or transform the child from this world's view to a higher view of things to come. As a result, White records that "parents are to provide to their children not only education but spiritual instructions. Parents, remember that your home is a training school, in which your children are to be prepared for the home above."<sup>[40]</sup> This instruction came when denominations were bombarded with theories, especially on education.

In the training and education of children, our pioneer suggests that "you are preparing them for higher ministry in religious things."<sup>[41]</sup> A joy and a life of service to others. Above all, parents are expected to raise their children in fear of God. Scripture does testify to that effect, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."<sup>[42]</sup> Parents are to instruct and train their children in the fear of the Lord. White suggests that; "The early training of children is a subject that all should carefully study. We need to make the education of our children a business, for their salvation depends largely upon the education given them in childhood."<sup>[43]</sup> She further says, "The training of childhood and youth should be of such a character that children will be prepared to take up their religious duties, and thus become fitted to enter into the courts above."<sup>[44]</sup> This process prepares the children to be better citizens in this world and the future.

Parents are commended and encouraged for bringing up children in the fear of the Lord. White states that "children who are Christians will esteem above every earthly blessing the love and approbation of their God-fearing parents. The parents can sympathize with the children and pray for and with them that God will shield and guide them. Above everything else, they will point them to their never-failing Friend and Counselor."<sup>[45]</sup> The counsel brings in some experiences from the Bible; "Parents should never lose sight of their responsibility for the future happiness of their children. Isaac's deference to his father's judgment resulted from the training that had taught him to live a life of obedience."<sup>[46]</sup>



## Ministries to the Children in Our Modern Times

There was an age when modern times were referred to as a period from 1960 to date. Cleland says, “Perhaps the worst problems in the 1960s lay in countries where there was a flood of immigration from the countryside to the cities that could not grow fast enough to provide even minimal services.”<sup>[47]</sup> Because of this immigration, we currently have children from nearby countries in South Africa. In such cases, children were forced out to seek livelihood in the cities. Cleland concurs with France, who mentions that “modernity brought about major changes. One of the most important was the migration of populations from rural to urban environments.”<sup>[48]</sup>

Population influx flooded our towns and cities, and for the first time in the history of this world, child labor was introduced in big industries and mines. Cleland further says that “child labor remains are also a problem under the commune of rural mainland China.”<sup>[49]</sup> Today's street children reside in the streets for various reasons. What is familiar to these children is that they are without hope; they are traumatized and helpless. Many also come from abusive homes, which may be a reason why these children are into drugs and bad behavior.

Several contributing factors are pulling children into the streets; one of the factors is music. Dobson and Bauer suggest that “Rock stars are the heroes, the idols, that young people want to emulate. And when they are depicted in violent and sexual roles, many teenagers and preadolescents are pulled along in their wake.”<sup>[50]</sup> These children fall victim to the commercialized adverts and movies on family TV channels. Scholars have asked questions, “What could be wholesome about showing explicit sexual scenes—especially those involving perversions—to 12 and 13-year-old kids? Neighborhood factors may also cause a risk to the developmental behavior of children. This may be due to poverty found within dangerous neighborhoods or the view that violence is an acceptable response to conflict.”<sup>[51]</sup> Hence, it is essential to watch your neighbourhood. Sometimes, “The authoritarian, permissive and absent disciplinary styles are equally unacceptable. None of these styles develops genuine obedience in the child, and they can lead to undesirable consequences such as poor motivation, antipathy to or rebellion against adults, and failure to develop self-discipline.”<sup>[52]</sup>

It is further recorded that Children in these conditions can be described in many words. Kilbourn says, “There are several words commonly used to describe the experience that children go through when they are involved in a war, an earthquake, a famine, or an accident.” Children who go through life-challenging situations end up being depressed. They appear calm and collected from a distance, but when observed closely, they are stressed.

Such children “may pride themselves on being calm, controlled or private children; suddenly they find themselves bursting into tears in public places, unable to sleep, being startled by sudden noises, experiencing nightmares or seeing pictures of a traumatic event in their heads in the daytime (we call these pictures “flashbacks).”<sup>[53]</sup> These children’s hope of a better tomorrow becomes impossible; they get discouraged with life.

The street children’s beliefs shift from certainty to uncertainty. They experience a different side of what life offers; right there, in the streets, they experience hunger, torture, exploitation, and all sorts of abuse. In other cases, studies about children who have experienced violence or deeper traumas go through PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). “Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an illness that many people suffer from, especially those who have been through a war or similar disaster.”<sup>[54]</sup>

Elsewhere, Kilbourn implies that walking far in any of the world’s big cities is almost impossible without seeing some sign of street children. They are found sleeping in shop doorways or begging from passers-by,

many clutching and ever-present solvent container to keep them high”[55]. Street children all over the world are experiencing life-threatening situations as a result of some misfortunes in life that went wrong. In many countries, including South Africa, children are left to roam the streets up to date. Children were seen in the streets soon after the 1960s. These children were found all over our cities; many of them spend life in shelters, some are just roaming the streets, and others become victims of violence to the point of losing their lives. France mentions that “throughout the 1960s and into 1970s youth crimes had been on the increase and, as the recession took hold, major anxieties concern were raised about the youth crime problem.”[56] In some instances, child killings appeared in most newspapers across the globe. Kilbourn records a touching situation in Brazil where the body of nine-year Patricio Hilario was found dead in the suburb of Rio de Janeiro with a note strung around their neck which read, “I killed you because you didn’t study and had no future .... the government must not allow the streets of the city to be invaded by kids.”[57]

Unsworth and Pufall said, “Religious communities have so much at stake in the acculturation of the young that theological disciplines and religious education have been slow to recognize the socially constructed character of childhood.”[58] These expectations include recognizing the children’s rights and respecting their dignity. Many children found in the streets have not had an opportunity to be ministered or mentored.

This habit existed in Christian times, although “children were not taught in the Synagogue until much later. The father was responsible for transforming what he had learned to his children.”[59]

Firstly, children need to be taught Christian values. As Habenicht mentions, “Without value goals for your family, you run the serious risk of meandering all over the values landscape without really teaching anything worthwhile.”[60] Therefore, it is important to teach values to children. They need to be taught good habits and principles early. Welch et al. gathered that “within a nation, status, rights, responsibilities, and obligations attributed to children affect their experience and life chances.”[61] Education, teaching, and modern behavior form part of instilling discipline in children. Habenicht concurs that “correcting irresponsible behavior won’t happen overnight. Be consistent, and don’t give up. Eventually, your child will respond, although things probably will get worse before they get better.”[62] Indeed, like the word of God, Proverbs 22:6 records, “Train up a child in the way he should go, And even when he is old he will not depart from it.” More training is required to improve the lifestyle of our modern children. Brand et al. further suggest that “parents are charged not to provoke their children (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21), a command that forbids all forms of abuse and neglect.”[63] Though it belongs to the father, this responsibility can also be done by the guardian or someone who has been given the child’s care. In Hebrew culture, “the father was responsible for the religious and moral training of his children (Deut. 6:7, 20-25; Exod. 12:26-27; Josh. 4:6-7), and before the law was given, he acted as the family priest (Gen. 12:7-8; Job 1:2-5).”[64]

Conn records that; “urban ministry has developed areas of specialization, at least five. One is working with at-risk people groups. At-risk people are children damaged before birth. They are street kids, abandoned kids.”[65] If the church focused on uplifting the plight of at-risk children in our societies, poverty would be reduced, and a great opportunity would be opened for city missions.

According to White, “Church schools are to be established for the children in the cities, and in connection with these schools, provision is to be made for the teaching of higher studies where these are called for.”[66] If the children are sent to schools, they will learn skills to help them survive unemployment, better their home backgrounds, and end poverty. Once we get the children out of the streets and place them in shelters, we can begin to equip them with skills.

Further, White argues that “the church has a special work to do in educating and training its children that they may not, in attending school or in any other association, be influenced by those of corrupt habits.”[67] This is possible only when the children are within the circles of responsible adults or parents committed to

making a difference in their children and bringing them according to God's principles.

Cannister mentions that “many teenagers in the church rarely attend an intergenerational worship service, opting instead for the homogeneous youth worship program that has become a church in its own within the church.”<sup>[68]</sup> This happens in many churches without a set program for young people. History teaches us that when youth are left alone with nothing to do, they become playful and sometimes notorious.

Without supervision, monitoring the children in the class, and checking that they are doing school work, our young people risk destroying each other and those around them. Osgerby records a situation that took place in Colorado on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1999. “Armed with an arsenal of pistols, shotguns, and pipe bombs, eighteen-year-old Eric Harris and seventeen-year-old Dylan Klebold went on a deadly rampage through classrooms and corridors, killing twelve of their fellow students and a teacher, before turning the weapons on themselves.”<sup>[69]</sup> This situation is one of the many instances in our schools and communities. Those who care about human life must devise strategies for saving our children; the problem is out of hand.

## SUMMARY

The article focused on the ministry to Joubert Park, Johannesburg street children. The sections covered were street children in the Old Testament. That section revealed that in the Old Testament, children also had challenges and issues, some of which were resolved and others were not. Some children ran away from home like Jacob but later found their way back and were reunited with their families. Others were indeed a blessing in their families. God called some children in their early years. Others became prophets, and others became kings.

In the New Testament, children were a blessing; we know little about children taking an active part in the New Testament. Many had an opportunity to meet and be blessed by Jesus. In Ellen White's writings, children were seen as responsible for keeping the faith and being involved in the gospel proclamation.

Modern children are a blessing to their families; they experience their challenges. They are those who ran away from home; these are street children who are found in our cities. Their circumstances differ, and their situations are at variance. Hence, such children are to be attended to by professionals and be rescued from the harsh world of the city streets. Street children need to be brought to shelters or homes where they can receive special attention to be rehabilitated into a regular lifestyle.

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