

Proposal

Title – Discipline Issues Among African Immigrant Families

Program of Study – Education

Presentation Type – PowerPoint

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Category – Basic Proposal

Abstract: With a marked increase of Africans immigrating to the United States, immigrants move into the United States they bring along their cultures with them, chief among them being African ways of disciplining children. Africans immigrant parents have found themselves on a collision course with their children and with government agencies regarding discipline. This proposal therefore, will examine the nature of conflicts in disciplining children among African immigrant parents in the United States and suggest strategies to resolving those conflicts. African immigrants have encountered culture shock, which has had an impact on how they discipline their children. For example, while it was acceptable to spank children in Africa, the laws in America regulate the practice. Some parents dissatisfied with the American discipline system have therefore, sent their children back to their home countries to learn morals. Some children accused their parents of being overhanded in the way they discipline them; others were unable to speak up against what they consider unjust treatments from their parents. Individual advocacy may be used to help the immigrant parents to understand what they are going through. Advocates may also assist African immigrant parents to appreciate the other proven forms of disciplining children beyond spanking – and how to use them. Helping professionals need to help the immigrant parents to see the United States government and the

child welfare persons as partners in raising their children, and by helping them to understand the provisions of the law. Forming parents' psychotherapy groups could especially help in resolving the conflict between parents and their children, and between the parents themselves.

Christian worldview integration:

The Bible speaks on the issue of parenting both in the Old and New Testaments. Clearly, the role of discipline is primarily given to parents. The way parents discipline their children speaks to their value system. Among the various ways the Bible discusses how parents should discipline their children, spanking (corporal punishment) has been one of the most controversial methods both within and outside the church. Yet the Bible clearly teaches, "Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them" (Proverbs 13:24 New International Version). This verse has been misinterpreted or misapplied to include forms of child abuse. I believe this verse does not condone child abuse. From the verse above, the key word is discipline. Discipline involves more than spanking. In other words, parents may use spanking as one of the forms of discipline to train their children in the way of the Lord.

Different cultures prescribe different ways of disciplining children. Not all of them can be justified biblically. This project allowed me the opportunity to research a topic that is both relevant to our culture and the church. Having worked with different immigrant families since moving to the United States, I have encountered different perspectives that have challenged me to do more research on this topic. As a leader working with the immigrant population, I have had to acknowledge a number of things. First, I will be sought out to give the Biblical guidance and counsel on parenting given my pastoral position. This is because some immigrants living in America, drawing from their collectivistic worldview, will seek out advice and guidance from

trusted community members. Secondly, most of the immigrant families I work with embrace spanking as the primary means of disciplining their children. Given my role as a pastor, an advocate, and an educator, I desire with God's help, to continue teaching the immigrant families to understand the Biblical perspective and guide them to find other tested means of disciplining their children.

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