

“Down to Earth” - Radio conversations about the critical Lausanne issues

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Episode	Programme 3
Filename	dte_eng_0003-Down to earth-children at risk-2 of 3.mp3
Issue	children and youth
Topic	children at risk - 2 of 3: response of the Church This is the first part of a longer discussion, second part is “children at risk - 3 of 3”
Length	9:35 min programme
Presenter	Rudolf Kabutz, TWR-SA
Speaker	Emmanuel Mbennah, TWR-Africa
Topic Summary	“Children at risk” are facing many harsh challenges, particularly here in Africa. However, children are very much on the heart of God. What role should the church play in transforming the lives of children? Unfortunately there are many obstacles that hinder the church in really serving children. We will be addressing how the church can respond in a relevant way for children at risk and hearing of a community that was transformed when children were helped.
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Complete Programme Manuscript

Intro – “Down to earth”

Welcome to the programme “Down to earth”, where we are talking about down to earth issues. Many years ago Jesus came to the earth and he helped people in many ways, he helped people spiritually, he helped people physically. In this series of programmes we want to touch on various issues we want to talk about spiritual issues and real physical issues and we want to follow Jesus’ example that we see how we can get real down to earth and can address the issues that are really important for us, particularly here in Africa. The Lausanne movement started in 1974 and has in many ways, addressed issues that are relevant for the church. The Lausanne movement is holding a congress in October this year in Cape Town, called ‘Cape Town 2010’, where many of the issues relevant for the church will be addressed and people worldwide are encouraged to participate in the discussion. Through this programme, ‘Down to Earth’, we want to speak to leaders around Africa, we want to share with you about the issues and we actually want to hear your voice, we want you to respond to the programmes. We’ve got an sms number where you can send your comments, the number is +27 782 785 300. We would love to hear from you to hear what you think, how you respond and what you would like to be doing. Many of these issues are critical for the church, many of the issues that are so relevant here in Africa, are also relevant for the church worldwide on the various continents of this globe.

The first topic we are talking about is children. We are particularly talking about children are at risk. In the studio we have with us Emmanuel Mbennah, he is the International Director for TWR Africa. He has had much experience working with vulnerable children, particularly in his home country, Tanzania. So he can speak from his deep insight into many areas of Africa particularly about children. Welcome Emmanuel Mbennah!

EM: Thank you very much.

In the last programme we talked about the main challenges that ‘children at risk’ are facing. Emmanuel, would you summarize for us what are the main challenges that are facing children.
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EM: When we talk of ‘children at risk’, you are primarily talking about a number of things; one key challenge would be child abuse. Many children are in abusive circumstances at home, at school, in the community, child trafficking, child prostitution all those are areas of abuse. But you are also talking of children who are in poverty situations, abject poverty as we say, and because of that they have no food, they have no sense of hope and their sense of self worth is destroyed because of abject poverty. So those two are among the areas of that characterise children at risk.

Now why is it so important for leaders to be concerned about these children?

EM: It is important for church leaders especially, to be concerned about children and these issues first because God’s heart for children would compel them to want to be concerned for the children. Clearly in scripture God’s heart is directed towards children and God has a plan for each one of his children, good plans for them to experience wholeness and the full peace and be the kind of people that will glorify Him. Unfortunately, the conditions of abuse and poverty and other conditions that place them at risk tend to frustrate the plans that God has, so these children will not be able to participate as fully members of God’s kingdom on earth.

Segue – “Down to earth”

With all these harsh realities around us and the children at risk suffering so much we understand that the Church can be the instrument to bring change, particularly to the lives of these children. What obstacles would there be for the church really to become engaged?

EM: Yes you are very right that, in his design, God has appointed the Church as his sole instrument to bring the desired change for the transformation of the lives of everyone, including children. We speak of ‘wholistic’ transformation that means spiritual, social, physical and even economic. Those conditions transform for the better to the Glory of God. It is the church that has been given that mandate from God in his design of things to execute that change, that transformation.

The obstacles that stand in the way of the church, and we talk of the church we are talking about leaders of the church. Quite a number of obstacles.

One of the obstacles I would say is a theological obstacle where the church does not have a clear theology on children and children’s ministries that translates itself in many ways including inadequate training and preparation of church ministers when it comes to children, so you go to a theological college, you go to a bible school, you prepare for church work you actually have very little training that covers children. And you may not say it’s the theological college to blame, they simply have no articulation of theology in relation to children ministry very very scanty.

But also another obstacle is simply: I think the church has borrowed from the social and cultural set up the view that social and cultures have of children. In our societies, many societies in Africa, I think, children are secondary. Children you know, they don’t have that much value – so the church has borrowed that!

Can you just expand that a bit. I find it difficult to understand how the views of children in society really relate to how the church views children.

EM: In society the child has nothing to contribute, doesn’t have any ideas, doesn’t have energy and doesn’t understand things and even the time of Jesus you know children were among the

items of a person in their home. So you can understand when the disciples prevented the children from coming to Jesus, you can understand because in the social set up– how dare you bring a child in public, how dare you bring a child to Jesus – of all people. Because he is a child, they are supposed to be ‘out there’, they are dirty, they are naughty: so that’s the view – it’s really a negative view.

Even when it comes to what kind of food is given to children many societies will give you know the poor food, the poor container of food, the leftovers – those would be the things that a child is given. It is a very reduced value of a child that society bestows and I have a feeling church leadership carries that along from their social and cultural upbringing and they have the same or similar view of children as their society and then that makes children unworthy of any good attention at church. After all, they do not give money, they don’t have strength to contribute to the church so they are the ‘non-paying passengers’ – they are just an unnecessary burden. That is the view and it is a negative one. That is a serious obstacle, serious obstacle.

I also think that the church just lacks the ability to minister to children effectively. Even where you have sufficient understanding and a heart that wants to minister to children, leadership, much of church leadership in Africa, just doesn’t know how to do it, so that is a big obstacle.

We really want you as the listener to participate, we want to hear your voice
Please write to us, send your sms to us on +27 782 785 300.

We would love to hear from you! You can also interact with the Lausanne website, please visit conversation.lausanne.org. I repeat the website, conversation.lausanne.org . And you can share your comments and write to us what you think about the question: ‘What is the greatest need amongst church leaders to enable them to address the children at risk?’

This is Rudolf Kabutz for “Down to Earth”. I wish you strength and joy as you reach out to the vulnerable children in your area.

Outro – “Down to earth”

Radio station on-air discussion guidelines:

Tip: You could invite an expert to facilitate discussions for people to call in (this could be on or off air) and share their thoughts and opinions.

Further possible discussion questions on-air:

1. How can you help the leaders around you to become concerned about children?
2. What obstacles are you experiencing in your environment that hinder the church really become engaged in “children at risk”?
3. Which negative views of children have infiltrated the church in your area? And how could these views be transformed into positive views of children?

Copy-righted music used in this programme:

To be submitted with your normal broadcasting music reports

CD name: **The quiet**
Track: **10. Sunset**
Length: 3:11
CD label: Birdwing Music (ASCAP)
Producer: John Michael Talbot and Phil Perkins
Orchestration: Phil Perkins

CD name: **Inner Peace**
Track: **9. Solo**
Length: 3:55
CD label: Mar Gospel Music Publishers
Producer: Lukie & Brenda Carelsen
Production & arrangements: Johan Heystek

CD name: **No Shadow of Turning**
Track: **5. Gethsemane**
Length: 2:44
CD label: Delta Music
Produced & Engineered: Jeff Johnson
Mixed & re-mixed: Jeff Johnson and Sammy Simpson