

**Discover News-sheet  
for colleagues in Africa  
September 2018**



**Use locally available resources**

**1. Your brain – for critical thinking!  
More thoughts**

Dear Friends

I always enjoy receiving feedback. Flory wrote from Northeast Congo, “Thanks for the newsletters, they help me to organize what I'm doing in my teaching.” Is that true for you too? I hope so! Please give me more feedback – positive or negative!

Further to my recent newsletter on the importance of critical thinking, I wish to make two further remarks:

1. I was shown a short video in which a Nigerian makes serious challenges of the Christian religion. He asks, “Does your God address the social issues that are in the country? Does this God address rape? Does he address poverty? Does he address wealth distribution? Does religion address infrastructure development?”

How would you answer these questions? They certainly should be answered. How can it be that in many African countries church and mosque attendance is very high, yet the governments are corrupt, there is widespread poverty and the infrastructure is hopelessly inadequate?

I would say a loud “yes” to all this man’s questions. But God does not intervene. God can do nothing except through us. Jesus Christ showed us how. He had a bias for the poor. He taught values that are nothing to do with accumulating material wealth but rather with love for all our neighbours. He taught us to embrace the outcasts in society.

Does religion address infrastructure and the social and economic problems of the entire community? My answer is that if we base our planning on the values promoted by Jesus, then our decision-making at the personal level, district level and national level will be such that the entire population will benefit.

For example, if we take the words of Jesus seriously,

- a) we will not judge others, e.g. of another tribe or religion, but will accept them as they are.
- b) we will not cheat anyone but seek to help and support them.
- c) we will give friendship to those people who others cast out of society.

- d) we will challenge those who seek to exploit others, for example ruthless commercial enterprises such as mines or tobacco companies that destroy the environment.
- e) we shall be servant leaders, that is, not the sort of leader who says “follow me!”, but rather the leader who teaches, supports, encourages and enables.

Do you agree?

2. Here in Germany a psychologist called Ahmad Mansour has vast experience of the problems of integration of people of many nationalities and races in Germany. In a new book, he comments that sometimes young Moslem men are told in the mosque that they should obey Allah unconditionally, and must never question what they are told. These are the young men who are most likely to join extremist groups, e.g. of Islamists fighting in Syria. If such young men also have authoritarian fathers who show their sons little love or tenderness, and who never talk with them, then they are even more likely to join an extremist group.

On the other hand, parents who talk with their sons and daughters and listen to what they think and feel, will have a totally different experience. The young people will feel valued and their capacity to think for themselves will be developed.

I suggest that, when young children time and time again ask “why?”, then we must have patience, and lovingly answer that question every time! Maybe we could first ask, “Well, what do you think?” Just as, when we are training others in a seminar, first we ask the participants to share their knowledge and experience.

I wish you success as you do your very best to be a creative force for good in your families and communities.

Many greetings,

Keith