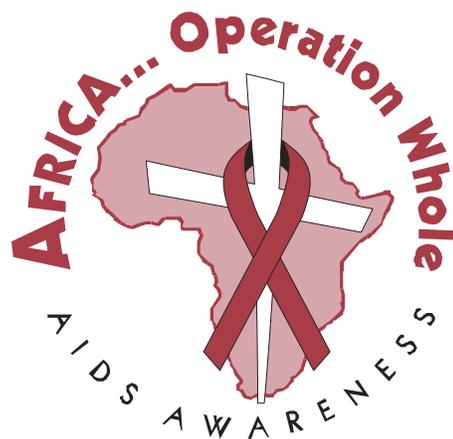


12

GIVING HOPE

Saving Our Generation
of Children & Youth



GIVING HOPE – SAVING OUR GENERATION OF CHILDREN & YOUTH

“For you have been my hope, O sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth” (Psalm 71:5).

⇒ REFR 14

What Are the Implications of HIV/AIDS on Today’s Generation of Youth?

- Our young people are the most vulnerable to the AIDS crises.
- Because of the loss of traditional, moral values young people are experimenting with and having sex earlier (outside boundaries), putting their age group at the greatest risk of dying before their time.
- Young people think they are invincible and immune to death, therefore, they also believe that HIV and AIDS will not infect them; but sadly, they are the group with the highest risk of infection.
- Because of AIDS, many young people believe there is NO HOPE; they will die of AIDS anyway, so they become fatalistic in their outlook.
- Our nations are investing vast sums of money in education and in the future for our youth. Yet, much of that investment will be lost to the nation, because our youth will never reach adulthood. They will die of AIDS first.
- The economic impact on African nations will be devastating because of early deaths from the HIV and AIDS pandemic. In some countries, the negative economic impact by premature deaths of those in their productive years is already being felt. Some of these areas being negatively impacted are: mining, security and police, military, professional sector, parliamentarians, skilled labour, etc. In Africa, nations have fought long and hard for sovereignty and equality, only to now lose the African dream of fair housing and family prosperity to the disease of AIDS. AIDS is decimating the African continent like no other enemy has in the past.
- Traditional moral culture is being confused with a mix of liberalism, westernisation, and individualism that makes it easy for the HIV virus and AIDS to attack Africa unabated.
- Many youth will feel hopeless and lack motivation to excel, thus robbing themselves and their country of their own valuable contribution.

⇒ SEXU 22

⇒ FACT 43

Pressure Facing Youth in Africa

⇒ FACT 44

1. Confusion between cultural moral values and liberalisation.

Young people used to enjoy the support of many adult role models in their growing years. By virtue of being an adult, they were expected to give instruction and discipline the children. Parents, aunties/uncles, grandparents, extended family, and community adults, as well as the Church gave input to the child in the past. This helped to mould the child’s value system and instill right moral values. Traditionally, the African child had many teachers.

Who Were the Teachers in Africa Then?

This can vary from tribe to tribe, country to country and custom to custom. However, there are some common pillars that generally have been accepted in the past regarding sexual instruction. Generally, the teaching of sexual matters and opposite-sex relationships was done by persons other than the parents. Some of these were grandparents, uncles, aunties, elders, and teachers, etc.

2. Confusion Due to the Loss of Traditional Values

Initiation schools were one such context of **life-cycle rituals**. Particularly **circumcision, virginity testing** and **initiation** into adulthood, which included instruction about sexuality, were part of African tradition. Here, children who had come of age were taught about relationships with the opposite sex, respect, bodily functions, etc. in ceremonies conducted by Elders. This was a holistic approach including spiritual and cultural traditions. While there may have been some practices included in these traditions in some places that needed evaluation in the light of Biblical teaching for Christians, the concept had practical and worthwhile value to the teaching of morals and life skills to the upcoming generation.

In many parts of Africa today, particularly in the urban centres, these ceremonies and methods of instruction have been eliminated. Some of the practices taught in some of the rituals were not felt to be Biblically sound by some churches. Others felt they were unnecessary. Traditionally, matters of sexuality were not casually talked about between older people and younger children. Therefore, once the initiation schools became a thing of the past, a great **void was created** which facilitated the teaching of moral values. Sadly in Africa, we now often have nothing at all to replace this formalised training of African children, especially about sexual matters. “The baby has been thrown out with the bath water,” so to speak, and in many African families there is no means whereby children are taught about moral matters and sexuality. By default in many communities, children wrongly learn **from one another**, and learn by the **media/TV/radio** which often communicate the wrong message. The system to take care of these things in many places has broken down.

3. Confusion Because of the Breakdown of the Family Unit

Africa too, has increasingly become urbanised, resulting in children being separated from parents at an early age. Some of these reasons are:

- Children being sent away where there is better education
- Fathers living apart from the mother and children, often due to work location
- Mothers increasingly finding jobs outside the home
- Children being brought up by friends, or distant extended family
- Divorce now being blended into African culture, AND MORE

➔ FACT 45

The Results on Children

- Multiplied thousands more street children than ever before
- Countless children being orphaned and not being cared for by the extended family system because it has broken down
- Gangs and drugs taking the place of parents
- Many children living by means of prostitution, crime, and lawlessness
- Unhealthy views of sexuality by children; confusion over their place and their future; sexual experimentation at an early age
- Epidemic health problems in children including HIV, STDs and AIDS
- Loss of young people in their productive years due to AIDS-related illnesses
- No system to care for the elderly and aged if children die prematurely
- No system to carry on the family name or business.

In the confusion of these conflicting ideologies, many parents still hold to some of the traditions that disallow them to speak openly with their children regarding sexual matters. Here the void and confusion become ugly! **The result: HIV and AIDS** continue to rob, kill, and destroy African young people, unabated.

The Challenge of the Christian Church to Assist in Filling This Void

➔ FACT 46

1. Helping parents in their roles

- By providing teaching from the Bible on the role of the **husband, wife, and children** in the home.
- By making parents aware of the change from traditional values to liberalisation and how to overcome the negative consequences.
- By instructing **parents of their God-given role** to be the first and primary teachers of their children regarding morality and sexuality (Deuteronomy 6:5-7; 2 Timothy 1:5).
- By providing a bridge whereby traditional silence on sexual matters is overcome, and by the Church facilitating parents and children with the tools necessary for moral instruction in a day of HIV and AIDS.
- By helping both father and mother and the children to stay in one location in order to facilitate good family life. Here the Church may have to lend expertise to assist families in establishing business and work that can keep the family unit together in the home.
- By clearly helping parents to define Biblical morality in their family:
 - abstinence before or outside of marriage
 - faithfulness in marriage
 - rules of respect for the opposite sex
 - life skill practices for children in making right choices
 - dealing with matters of masturbation, peer pressure, etc.
 - behaviour choices, hard work, etc.

➔ FACT 47

The following is a sample of age-appropriate teaching guidelines for parents. Parents must individually assess each child regarding sexuality, as to what to teach, when to teach and at what age, and how much to teach. Each child is developmentally different so there are NO STRICT rules here as to what is best for each individual child. The following is only a guideline as to what can be appropriate teaching for children at specific ages:

Age-Appropriate Teaching for Children



Toddlers (age 3-5) = their special body, beginning 'good' and 'bad' touches (see section on Child Abuse for 'good/bad' touches).

First Grade (age about 6 & 7) = special body, good hygiene, washing hands, foundation laying and 'good/bad' touches. (Note: see section on Child Abuse for good/bad touches.)

2nd to 4th Grade (age 7-9) = special body, body parts and functions, sexual molestation that my body is for me and no one else has a right to touch my private parts (including family members and authority figures), reinforcement of good/bad touches.

5th to 6th Grade (ages 9-11) = my special body, reinforce body parts and functions. Establish a firm base of right and wrong; begin to prepare for puberty and teen years and what his/her body will do at that age so he/she is not caught unaware (where babies come from, etc.). Begin to talk to the child about the differences between girls and boys and their bodies, etc.

7th to 8th Grade (ages 12-13) = my special body, self-worth and my value, menstruation for girls, body changes particularly in private parts and what to expect. Help the child to understand his/her feelings and self-control. Dialogues of trust between the child and parent/s must be fostered by good communication skills. Peer pressure, right choices, life skills for good behaviour must also be cultivated.

9th to 10th Grade (ages 14-16) = self-worth, respecting others, self-control over hormonal urges, dealing with peer pressure, family and community values, fostering responsibility, dealing with attitudes, opposite sex relationships, skills for wholesome group activity involvement, and avoiding addictive behaviours (drugs, alcohol, etc.) is important at this age.

11th and 12th Grade (ages 17-19) = opposite sex relationships, masturbation, healthy activities, responsible work skills, career choosing, risk behaviour including sexual behaviour and consequences, Biblical values versus unbiblical values. Instruction on avoiding deviant sex including same sex, etc., is an important preparation for this age.

2. Understanding and Overcoming the Barriers in Educating Today's Youth

- Youth are often **physically distant** and separated from those who traditionally taught sexuality and sex, in Africa. Children are often sent away to school and have little contact with elders who traditionally taught sex.
- Youth are becoming more **culturally distant** from those who traditionally taught sexuality and sex, in Africa. With all the pressures of urbanisation and modernisation, youth are often not carrying on with the traditional mind set of their adult teachers.

- Youth **want to be taught by their parents!!** The authors of this manual, after talking with multiplied thousands of young people each year, hear the same story from the young people: *“We want our parents to talk with us openly and honestly about these matters and we feel very upset that our parents refuse.”*
- Sometimes both the parents and the young people do not know where to begin to talk together about sexuality, personal behaviours, and life skills.

3. Giving Answers to Some of the Questions the Young People are Asking

It is important that parents, pastors, and elders understand that very often young people view matters in ways which are different from the older generation’s thinking. Parents who fail to appreciate and understand this often scorn the attitudes of the young people, rather than helping them with ‘right’ attitudes and lifestyles. This separates and alienates the youth even further.

Traditionally, African culture has had a much more Biblical approach to young people growing up, grooming them for **interdependence**. As a young man or young woman matured into adulthood, he/she was shaped to relate to others in these ways:

- Finding his/her place in the extended family. Children were not viewed as separate from the family, but rather gained their identity by the family structure;
- Fitting into roles that would support older family members **emotionally, economically, spiritually, etc.** Young people, particularly once they came of age, would begin to take supportive family roles in many ways. First born sons in particular, would be groomed to make family decisions and to think of the well being of the family unit.
- Living within proximity to the nuclear family unit, even once married so that the extended family stayed intact. Everyday life of young people not only concerned themselves, but concerned many families within the extended family, reinforcing **interdependence**.

God’s pattern for healthy relationships in the family unit and in the Church is **interdependence**. This is the principle of each person needing the other.

Modernisation has introduced another approach called **independence**. Young people around the world, and in Africa, often move into their teen years with a mindset of **independence**. This is particularly common in Western culture where even Christian parents of teenage children expect their children to exhibit **independence** in almost everything. This is characterised by some of the following:

- Removing himself/herself from the family as much as possible. Teenagers want their own rooms where parents are not permitted access.
- Doing “what I want” and feeling that it is none of anyone else’s business.
- Believing that being close to parents and/or family is not “cool,” therefore, the teenager removes himself/herself from most family activity.

- Feeling it is unfashionable to listen to parents, and it is unfashionable to be tied in with the family work, business, and activity.
- Developing closer relationships with peers (schoolmates, gangs, girlfriends or boyfriends), than with family members.
- Allowing modern music, TV, and magazines to mentor the teenager rather than the parents or extended family.
- Feeling as a teenager that what he/she does with his/her life only affects him/her, therefore, their life's goals do not include the extended family members.

Questions Being Asked by Teenagers

1. How do I relate to authority?
2. How can I be my own person and still listen to my parents?
3. How can I be accepted by my friends?
4. How do I choose friends?
5. Why is my body feeling like it does? Why do I have these sexual thoughts in my head?
6. Why do parents behave as they do?
7. How can I not make the same mistakes as my parents?
8. Why don't my parents spend time with me? Why do they only give me rules?
9. Why do my parents act like sex is unmentionable? Is sex bad, is that why they won't talk about it with me?
10. Why does the Church never talk about issues that we face in the real world? Why do they always speak about things we don't face every day in our lives?
11. Why do Church people act like they are so holy, because I can never be like them?
12. Why do I fear Jesus so much? Does He hate me because of the bad things I do?
13. Why does my father seem so removed from my family?
14. Who can I really talk to?

4. Helping with Girl/Boy Relationship Instruction

Traditionally in Africa, girls and boys did not 'date' in the teenage years. Young people stayed in groups for activities. As one became of a marriageable age, the family would participate in helping the young adult look for a prospective marriage partner. Different cultures had different practices. However, commonly in Africa there was direct family involvement in the choosing of a mate for the young adult.

In today's generation, this healthy way of developing relationships with the opposite sex in the teen years is becoming westernised in Africa. Increasingly, African young people are moving into the 'dating' kind of lifestyle where boy meets girl; boy and girl form a relationship for a period of time where they are closer than just friends. This often leads to sexual activity earlier in life, because 'everybody is doing it'!

How Can the Church Help with Relationships?

➔ FACT 50

- Give **Biblical teaching** on opposite-sex relationships (boy/girl relationships) upon reaching the teen years, and do it several times per year.
- Provide frequent, weekly **group activities** for young people within the context of the Church (i.e. in the church youth group).
- **Involve teenagers** in the **whole life** of the **Church**. Involve them in Bible studies, prayer meetings, outreach and evangelism programs, etc.
- Deal with **relevant issues** that youth are concerned about (i.e. parent communication, choices, lifestyles, leisure time, thought life, peer pressure, family participation, music, sports, clothing and dress, character development, positive and negative habits, drugs/alcohol/tobacco, sexual matters, etc.)
- Provide the atmosphere that fosters **good communication** between young people and the church leadership.
- **Involve parents** frequently in church youth activities. This fosters a good relationship among the youth, parents, and church.
- Be sensitive to **spot problems** in the life of the young person. For example: a troubled youth can often start missing church, alienate himself/herself; begin to withdraw, demonstrate a more negative attitude, display unhealthy familiarity with the opposite sex, and show signs by distasteful music or clothing.
- Allow teenagers room to mature in all areas (physically, emotionally, relationally, mentally, and spiritually) and do not **expect** teenagers to excel in every area. Allow **room for failure**, giving solutions to personal growth.
- Never criticise, devalue, or **make the teenager feel worthless**. Teenagers have wonderful memories and do not forget those who belittle them. This will always push teenagers away from the church.

5. Developing Self-Worth in the Teenage Youth

African youth are increasingly falling into the trap of American youth, that their value is determined by what **others** think of them. It is critical that the Church help young people to understand and develop images of self-worth.

God's Affirmation of the Young Person

1. The young person is created individually by God in His image (Genesis 1:26).

I am special because I am one-of-a-kind. God only made one of me!

➔ STAT 12

2. The young person is created and known individually by God (Psalm 139:13-16).

I am special because I am wonderfully made!

➔ FACT 51

3. God loves me for 'who' I am, not what I do or how I act (Song of Solomon 2:4; Jeremiah 31:3).

God loves me just the way I am!

➔ FACT 52

4. God loves me even when I make mistakes (1 John 4:19).
*There is nothing I can do to make God love me more;
there is nothing I have done to make God love me less!*

➡ FACT 53

6. Helping Youth Know the Difference between ‘Love’ and ‘Lust’

God is love (1 John 4:8; 4:16) and **TRUE LOVE** will manifest God’s character.

➡ SEXU 04

Some of these character descriptions of **GOD** and **LOVE** will be:

➡ SEXU 05

**TRUSTWORTHY
RESPECTFUL
BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN YOU AND THE OTHER PERSON
KIND
DOESN’T LOVE YOU THEN LEAVE YOU
UNSELFISH
DOESN’T USE YOU FOR SELF-GRATIFICATION
NOT RUDE
GIVING
BELIEVES IN YOU
HONEST
DOESN’T CHEAT
OPEN, NOT SECRETIVE
NOT CENTRED ON SEX**

Many young people mistake “love” for “infatuation” or “lust”. Someone may say the right words and show an interest in you, but that does not mean he/she loves you. Young people must be helped to recognise their feelings and to sort out the true from the false.

➡ SEXU 06

“**Infatuation and lust**” can be characterised by the **exact opposite** from **LOVE**.

**SELFISH
RUDE
SECRETIVE
USES THE OTHER PERSON
SELF-GRATIFYING
DISHONEST
SELF-CENTRED
LOVES YOU AND LEAVES YOU
HURTFUL
CHEATS
DISTRUSTFUL
CENTRED ON SEX**

7. Helping Youth with Life Skills for Relationships and Avoiding Pre-marital Sex

The following are some concepts that can be taught to both parents and youth. Skills to carry out these “principles” need to be frequently taught. Parents need to make it their business to **KNOW** the whereabouts of their teenagers, and to **KNOW** what they are doing.

➔ SEXU 03

How Can I Live Long and Not Get AIDS?

➔ SEXU 13

- Know that everyone has sexual feelings, and they are not evil in themselves. It is what one does with his/her sexual feelings that makes them right or wrong.
- Know that while you are growing up, and until you are old enough to marry, you are maturing and developing in every way so that you will become all that God created you to be. Concentrate on the things that will help you reach your maximum potential in Christ.
- Plan your ‘fun’ times. Idle time is the devil’s workshop. Activities need to be planned. If you ‘fail’ to plan, you plan to ‘fail’.
- Choose your friends well. Make friends with other youth that will help lift you up, not tear you down.
- Do fun things with groups of good friends. Do not be alone with friends of the opposite sex. There is safety in groups.
- Keep your body and ‘hands’ to yourself. Show respect to the private areas of your own body and the body of others.
- When you get a feeling of sex in your body, RUN quickly and participate in a wholesome activity. The Bible says to flee (run away from) youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22). Run and participate in some sports, or some other activity that will use your energy in non-sexual ways that are good.
- Know that your private parts and sexual activities are not for your friends. God gave them to you and you are special. Know that it is healthy and clever not to have sex while you are still growing up before getting married.
- Set boundaries for yourself. A boundary is like a fence over which you will never cross. For example, a good boundary in relationships as a teenager is: *I will never engage in anything with my body that I would not do in front of my parents.*
- Be accountable to someone you trust about your sexual feelings. It is better to choose someone who is much older than yourself that can be a role model. This can be parents, a pastor or his wife, or a close relative, etc.
- Ask Jesus to help you stay pure; and He will help you. Remember there is no temptation that comes your way that God will not provide a way of escape if you ask Him (1 Corinthians 10:13).

➔ FACT 54

➔ FACT 55

➔ SEX U 14

There is Much for the Church of Jesus Christ to do in the HIV/AIDS Crises in Africa

The challenge for the local and national church is to be in the forefront ministering in all aspects of the HIV/AIDS crisis. Rather than remaining silent about the worst killer to hit Africa and ignoring it, The church CAN and WILL make a difference. Albeit, the church has come in late in the progress of the pandemic, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, but it is not too late! The church can help to stop AIDS!



SEXU 10

The church can rise up with instruction, education, hope, healing, mercy, and compassion to STOP the continuing premature deaths from AIDS in today's generation. May God help us to do so with great effectiveness.