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All correspondence and inquiries concerning publication, subscription and the institute should be directed to: The Associate Editor, Dr. John Ayo Oladapo, c/o Baptist College of Theology Igede Ekiti +234(0)8035608098. familylifeandsociety@gmail.com/johnayoladapo@gmail.com

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Anyigba, Nigeria, atteh.dg@ksu.edu.ng,
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- Oderinu Elizabeth Olubunmi, Baptist College of
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pstbunmioderinu@gmail.com 211-227

THE PLACE OF SEX EDUCATION IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN FAMILY

- Oluwasegun D. Ajao, Baptist College of
Theology, Igede-Ekiti, Ekiti State.
oludav17@gmail.com and
- Folaranmi Joshua Dairo, H.O.D Theological
Studies, Baptist College of Theology,
Igede-Ekiti. abake12alabi@gmail.com 228-241

Contributors' Biographies

Hannes Knoetze is a professor at the University of Pretoria's Department of Practical Theology and Mission Studies.

Yaw Adu-Gyamfi is a Professor at the University of the Western Cape/Christian Service University College. Rev Prof. Yaw Adu-Gyamfi serves as the consultant to the Glocal Theological Academy (GLOTA) programme of Glocal Compassion in Germany.

Esther Olajumoke Ayo-Oladapo PhD is a lecturer at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, She also served as the Coordinator, French Language Centre, Ministry of Education, Ondo State

Abiodun James Aderele is a Baptist minister and theological educator with a special apostolic calling to reach out to Muslims and other faiths and to pursue peaceful coexistence in the society for societal development. He was an adjunct lecturer at the Baptist College of Theology, Igede, Ekiti. He is a Doctor of Philosophy (World Religions “Islam”) candidate at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso. He has authored a book, chapters in books and journal articles nationally and internationally.

John Ayo Oladapo PhD is a Baptist minister and theological educator. He is a senior lecturer at Baptist College of Theology, Igede-Ekiti. He is a researcher in the field of religion with a special interest in Ethics and Pastoral Care and Counselling. He has authored Books, chapters in books and journal articles nationally and internationally.

Adedayo Oladele Odesola, PhD, is the Rector of the Baptist College of Theology, Igede-Ekiti, Nigeria. He was the chaplain of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary (NBTS) in Ogbomoso, Nigeria, and he is a faculty member in the faculty of Theological Studies, Department of Intercultural Studies, where he was also the Head of the

Department. He holds an HND in Marketing (The Polytechnics Ibadan, Nigeria), a Master of Divinity in Missiology (NBTS Ogbomoso), an M.A. in Intercultural Studies (Bethany International University Singapore) and a PhD in Church History (NBTS).

Foluke O. Odesola, PhD is a faculty member at the Baptist College of Theology, Igede-Ekiti. She holds a Master of Divinity in Christian Education and an M.A. in Christian Education (NBTS). She has her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of South Africa.

Otun Michael Oluwajuwonlo is a trained journalist at the International Institute of Journalism, Abuja, and holds B.A. in Theology, B.A. Christian Religious Studies, M.A. Christian Religious Studies (Philosophy of Religion), holds a Doctoral degree from NBTS, Ogbomoso. He is a PhD candidate in the Department of Religious Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria. He is the pastor of Gateway Baptist Church, Basiri, Ado Ekiti, and lecturer at St. Enock Theological Seminary, Ado Ekiti.

Victor Umaru is a lecturer at the Baptist College of Theology, Obinze. He is a PhD student at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso.

Gabriel Salifu, PhD, University of Ibadan and he is clergy at Glorious Life Ministries, Ilorin, Kwara State.

Abraham Olutoye Odeleye PhD is an ordained Baptist minister with ministerial experience and a senior lecturer at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso. He is a PhD holder with specialization on Ethics (Christian Ethics). His research and teaching interest include materialism, corruption, sexuality and research methodology reporting. He has publications to his credit. He is happily married and the family is blessed with children.

Zechariah Manyok Biar, PhD. is a research fellow at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, Department of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology, Faculty of Theology. He is also the Diocesan Bishop, Diocese of Wanglei, Jonglei Internal Province, Episcopal Church of South Sudan-Anglican Communion.

Job Ayinla Kosoluware is the Pastor of First Baptist Church, 'Laditan Quarters, Oja-Odan, Ogun State, Nigeria. He has the following qualifications: Dip.Th, B.Ed, M.Th, M.A, PhD candidate, Nigerian Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso.

David Gbenga S. Atteh, MA.NT; MA.OT; PhD; MNASR, MNUSREL. Senior Lecturer, Kogi State University, Anyigba, and Adjunct Lecturer, Federal University, Lokoja. Former HOD and Deputy Provost Academics, ECWA Theo Sems, Igbaja and Aba, respectively. He is a Google Scholar whose publications (readership, rating & recommendation), as at September 2023, "have reached a milestone!"

Samuel Olusanya Asaolu, PhD, is a lecturer at the Baptist College of Theology, Igede-Ekiti

Oderinu Elizabeth Olubunmi is a lecturer at Baptist College of Theology, Igede-Ekiti. She teaches Christian Worship, Hymnody and Music Fundamental.

Oluwasegun D. Ajao is a lecturer at the Baptist College of Theology, Igede-Ekiti, Ekiti State.

Folaranmi Joshua Dairo, is a lecturer and Head of Department, Theological Studies, Baptist College of Theology, Igede-Ekiti. He holds Masters Degrees in New Testament Theology, Language and Literatures from the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso.

Editorial

One of the pressing questions that reverberates often in African Christianity is: What is an (African) Christian family? Family is very important to the traditional Africans. Raising a family is not just a social and cultural demand that has to be meant, but also a conditional for eschatological redemption or salvation. For the African Christian, the place of family cannot also be over-emphasised. Thus, prayers for the family in all its ramifications occupy the central stage in personal and intercession sessions. Although African Christians have for a long time contended with the notions of the Christian family in general, there is a progressive acceptance of its monogynous union based on heterosexuality. However, Western values and globalisation forces have continued to shape Christian family discourses and practices. Sex and sexuality issues have been escalated and mediated so much so that Christian 'theology' of family, sexuality, and sex has to contend with the throes of globalisation.

This volume, which is a product of the 2023 conference on the theme: Christian Family and Sexuality in Contemporary Society, critically reflects the tensions, challenges, and theological prospects of a Christian family. In the lead article, Professor Knoetze departs from the general conception of the Christian family based on Christ's salvation. Although he points out that family is a contested issue in Africa, he argues that a radical conception of the Christian family should centre around relationality, forging a missional relationship with the Trinitarian God. This is in contrast with the soteriological conception of family that has blurred the missional prospects that understanding family can birth for a long time.

Adu-Gyamfi's article also radically takes on the traditional conception of sex as a purely private issue, and attempts to strike a balance between it and the sexual revolution that theology of sexuality has to contend with. Coming from a heteronormative perspective, Adu-Gyamfi strongly maintains conservative theological stand on sexuality. He argues that the biblical

understanding of sexuality cannot be traded with the offering of the over-sexualised world.

On her own, Ayo-Oladayo explores the significance and nexus between language education and family development. She points out that effective communication in the family is a *sine qua non* for cohesion, unity, and progress. In addition to fostering cultural understanding, supporting cognitive growth, and fostering stronger family ties, it also improves communication abilities. Oladapo and Adererele examine the positive impacts of social change, particularly technological advancement, on the family. They opine that despite the advantages derived from modern communications devices, Christian theological understanding of the family should be countenanced and appropriated by Christian families.

Odesola and Odesola reflect on the significance of sex education in the church. Although sex education has not been a major interest in missional and catechetical teaching, they suggest that contemporary challenges make it imperative for the church to be interested in sex education. Otun's article introduces a philosophical dimension to sexuality discourse. Otun views the relegation of reason in choice- and decision-making processes as unacceptable and recommends a balanced deployment of both reason and faith in sexuality matters. Gombi re-examines the accounts of Genesis and contemporary sexual expressions. In the Genesis creation stories, an explanation of the nature of sexuality takes a central, climactic positioning and is given as a fundamental fact of creation. The excessive amount of material given to sexuality highlights its relevance in the Hebrew Bible within the cosmic context of the creation narratives. The foundation for the rest of the biblical narrative and discourse on human sexuality is provided by the profound depiction of God's original plan for human sexuality at the beginning of the canon, which also captures the core ideas of sexuality. Salifu enumerates the negative effects of street hawking, such as rape, unplanned pregnancies, and violence. He recommends that the state and social institutions should intervene to stem the corrosive tide of street hawking in Nigeria.

Biar explores the disagreement between 'pre-modernism' and postmodernism. He argues that the different positions these schools of thought hold have created serious tension in how to understand human sexuality. The recognition of feeling over reason and the relativistic contours that encircle the arguments of postmodernism, modernism, and premodernism all have impact on Christian notion of sexuality. He, however, maintains that the Bible still reserves the best model of sexual appreciation in contemporary society. For Kosoluware, the negative influences of postmodernism should be frontally addressed by contemporary African Christians. It is essential that the Church in Africa rise to the challenge through teaching, counseling and intentional preaching of the gospel. Atteh examines Christian moral victory, and points out the tensions that have characterised its different interpretations. He opines that the best approach to the theological issue is to insist that the victory believers have over the flesh nature is both positional and progressive, encompassing both the divine and the human responsibilities. Asaolu tackles the increasing cases of marital infidelity in society. Articulating the causes and effects of marital infidelity, Asaolu recommends that couples act in such a way that their actions could conform with Kantian categorical imperative. Finally, Ajao makes a case for sex education as a part of socialisation in the family. He notes that it is no longer possible to hold the view that sex talk is a taboo. Therefore, there should be a conscious approach to addressing sexuality issues.

This volume is a coterie of discourses on sex, sexuality and family. The burning issues raised from multidisciplinary perspectives enrich the volume and provide a critical resource for further engagement. However, the ideas are solely the responsibility of the authors rather than the editorial board of the journal.

Benson Ohihon Igbion
Editor-in-Chief

THE PLACE OF SEX EDUCATION IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Oluwasegun D. AJAO

oludav17@gmail.com

and

Folaranmi Joshua Dairo

Baptist College of Theology, Igede-Ekiti, Ekiti State.

abakeizalabi@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper sets out to examine and investigate the influence sex education can have on the life of a family. The home or family is an agency of education right from the onset because it is a place where a child relates to. The word of God strongly emphasizes that Christian nurture is a must from home, where the quality and direction of any child's life are determined. Sex education is regarded as crucial as part of caring for a child within the confines of family ties. There is awareness already that anxiety about the rising tide of sexual crime is high in society. The role of the home as the first institution in the business of educating a child in the way he should go is not to be downplayed. The parents' contribution to ensuring children are well taken care of right in the home-front is enormous and complex to replace. The writer, therefore, uses an analytical approach to the work, tapping into scholars' views. It would be correct and acceptable to have the fulfilment of the purpose of God for placing children in a family unit. When they are still in the custody of the parents or guardians, attention is expected to be given to help them be the best they need for success. This paper discusses the relevance of sex-education. With it, the parents would help their children to meet their sexual needs as the Creator demands. The paper also mentions the dangers to avoid when employing sex education. It highlights the steps with the right values and principles attributed to a lifestyle of strong and lasting character.

Keywords, Sex Education, Parenting, Home/Family, Morality, Values/Principles

Introduction

The rate of immorality in society virtually affects all things in the system, both at micro and macro levels. Such does not spare the corridor of human sexuality, to which the parents seem not to be sensitive enough, as they seemingly fold their arms watching and neglecting the God-given responsibility for their children. Okunola (2015,10) asserts that parents are deficient in the way they live their lives, making the children bear the brunt. The society is so permissive that it is sexually charged where sex sells because it is cheap. Connor and Revell reveal that unbridled sex talk is available over the phone and is advertised on television (2004,78). In line with the above is the report of Feucht and Clark (1986,39) that sex has become a commonplace word in the home, mass media, and in the community. No matter where one goes, sex is a much-discussed subject. Unfortunately, many people do not have a wholesome view of sex because of the distorted context in which it is placed.

Sex is synonymous with gender. It is defined as the physical activity between two people in which they touch each other's sexual organs, and which may include sexual intercourse'. (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2010, 1353). The two people mentioned in the preceding definition are male and female. Whatever is incorrect with the issue of sex becomes, and forms part of learning children receive when they are educated to know what is acceptable. Education generally is the kind of instruction or training given to a child who acquires skills about how things are done and handled. If education is seen from this perspective, it is not limited to schooling. Templar argues that it is the schools' job to educate the children, but it is the parents' job to educate them (2008,149). This is why effort is consciously made for necessary, factual nurturing in every generation for the right direction. From the onset, life should be at par with education, even from home. Supporting this idea is the

submission of Tidwell (1996,7) that “it (education) was so intricately interwoven with life that to fail in teaching and learning was to fail in life itself”.

People have generally accepted this trend of providing education by parents from the home environment that such training should touch the sexual life of all humans. To corroborate these arguments, Nihinlola, Olola and Oyedemi, in their work titled *Discipleship Handbook on Sex Education*, assert that “Sexuality is the total behaviour of who we are as human beings; (so) it affects the whole personality from childhood to old age” (2017,18-19). Such an important thing needs proper education. Therefore, it requires that sex education be introduced right in predominantly Christian families, as is the belief of this writer. This paper's crux is to establish that sex education is to be first handled through parenting, especially when parents realize it is an integral part of the overall role they need to take on each of their wards.

Sex-Education as a Concept

The misuse of human sex life automatically calls for sound knowledge on how to handle sex right from childhood. Sex education is one of the topics anyone may not want to dabble into because people feel it is sensitive, and so, it is no-go-area.” This belief is erroneous, and it is dangerous for humans who are naturally made in God's image and expected to act according to His likeness. Relenting to discussing it will make one lose a sense of purpose. As children develop, education on sexual matters is part of the teaching they should have if the development will not be truncated, and it is to be mentioned often. According to Howell (1973,3), sex education is a “continuous process of teaching... to develop and live with a set of values about sex and its place in human development in the light of basic biological factors”. The trouble caused by the wrong sex today renders many lives useless, and this is traced to faulty upbringing. They did not receive enough help when they were young. Supporting this, Olayinka explains that sex education is a means that is designed

to prepare humans to cope and develop the task of being responsible men and women in future (1987,30-34). Children who undergo thorough education about sex will definitely have correct and adequate factual information and understand the problem of sex, such as its development, function and expression. This may be the reason why an author confidently declares that sex education should not be avoided due to its overwhelming interest in sexual matters (Olugoroye 1994,40).

In her opinion (Miller, 2003,13) argues that when the knowledge of sex education is brought vis-à-vis the effects of immoral sex to develop humans, it will surely keep them from wrong sexuality. It would also provide answers to the immoral sex and other sexual questions that inquisitive young people may ask. The woman further opines that sex-education as a means will provide logical explanations for physical and physiological changes which occur to young people in order to take care of their sexual feelings (Miller, 2003).

Remembering the essence God places on humans to have created them in His own image will attract the assertion given that sex education will teach an individual to understand and accept himself in a healthy, constructive and meaningful manner, including learning to live sexually into a satisfactory societal pattern (Olugoroye, 1994,30). What this will do is an attempt to guide the mental conception, physical development and social interaction of a person about sex so that the person may develop wholesome sexual views, attitudes and behaviours, but not without the proper agency who is sure of giving the needful to the innocent ones.

Parenting Roles in Providing Education on Sex Matters through Home/Family

The focus of every part of parenting should be that solace will finally be a result. This depends on how such parenting is handled in the home-environment. Parenting is said to be the process of caring for one's child or children, as Hornby (2001,1076) puts it. The task of

parenting, as mentioned here, is a Christian vocation, which happens to be God's and thrives in the atmosphere of faith. According to Ishee (1974,22), children's lives are placed in the hands of the parents, who are up to guide and direct the former into their full potential. This will go a long way in a child's life as he interacts and relates, but Dubey and others warn against poor parenting in which children only relate with what they call 'adopted parents' (1979). It can only result in their vulnerability, which questionable characters like the wrong peer group can act on to influence them negatively.

Home or family has remained the first institution that God ordains. There is something significant about this. That is why it is the Christian parents' responsibility to raise their children. This has the dimension of divinity in that parents who would do this successfully must be of God. Segler (1974,43) fully corroborates the forgoing statement when he says the parents should know themselves theologically. The particular thing about this is the relationship between the parents and God, with the mind that parenting should come from within, which will help them to lead their children into the proper relationship with God. It is in this condition that meaningful teaching about sex will stand, and a solid foundation is laid. When parents are dedicated to guiding, directing and educating their wards, it becomes easy to see it as a religious duty that cannot be delegated.

Home or family is that institution which cannot stand aloof; it is formed out of marriage. Marriage is the legal relationship between a husband and a wife. (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 910). With this, we can then be talking about a good family life. It is defined “as the routine interactions and activities that a family have together provides biblical practical for the relationship” (<https://www.yourdictionary.com>). This will help the parents to understand, as viewed by Kurt Bruner, that marriage and parenthood reveal God's character, putting children in families so they can experience his love and learn how to love others (<http://www.focusonthefamily.com>). The importance of family cannot be overemphasized if life in such a family will be tolerable and

healthy. It is not out of place that Jesus Christ is brought into a family. Pam Woody confirms this by saying, “Even though Jesus is God of the universe, His Father still saw the need to set Him in a family” (<http://www.focusonthefamily.com>). This means that it is within the nurturing care of His earthly family that Jesus grows in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men, as found in Luke chapter two, verse fifty-two. So, parents, both husband and wife, have to cooperate in the task of nurturing their children in the way they would go without any excuse. It is in the atmosphere of everyday family life that sex education will be seen as a joint venture in order to derive good results.

The parents have to understand that they are saddled majorly with the responsibility of educating their children on all issues, including that of sex. To be sure that this assignment of educating children on this matter in question should be shouldered first in the home, Joy (1986,11) complements and maintains that, Parents are God's first curriculum, that every child's right is to have a resident mother and father. The reason for this is reiterated by Getz and Getz when they remark that children can have certain learning experiences at home, which are almost impossible to get in any other setting—church or school (1986,578). Therefore, in a situation whereby another institution, say schools, takes up sex education, it should be supported by the home (Olugoroye, 1994, 39-42).

As per the people who stand opposing sex discussion, Ayonrinde (1982,4-5) refers to it as sex ignorance, which can only escalate to more problems of sex, which demoralizes. He instead calls their attention to the fact that the merits and the demerits of sex only need to be emphasized during the sex education period. No one can shy away from the standing truth that God creates sex with clear instruction and intention. Agreeing with the forgoing are Lahaye (1998,56), Miller (2009,19) and (Garland, 3) with the affirming statement that sex is beautiful but only in marriage and according to God's direction. They all sound warning that, since God says no to sex before and outside marriage, children should be directed to say no to the wrong sex. It should be noted that if parents and children first know to keep quiet by not teaching their children about issues

concerning sexual activities, the latter will learn it somewhere else, but it may be disastrous.

According to Oladele (1979,7-9), when he is talking about the contemporary period, which he calls a time that encourages permissiveness, pills, sex perversion, and the use of condoms, he says they are the order of the day. Gbolahan (2002,36) and Igwe (2006,65) affirm positively and liken sex education to the use of condoms. However, it is impossible for anybody, young or old, to remain a virgin after the use of a condom. Such teaching is false and should be avoided by the Christian family.

Dangers to be avoided in Sex Education

The subject of sex education has remained a substantial controversy due to the different angles different people see it. Christian parents and other care-givers need to be informed that this should not shake them; they only need to be careful and decide to fulfil the purpose of God by touching human sex.

Much disparity has occurred among the individuals who should handle the educating assignment. Gudorf (1989,11-35) believes that there is ignorance on the part of the parents, though they are the proper sexual educators. This makes them have limited experience and so cannot pass along anything they are ignorant of. Duvall (1969,78) states that the kind of sex education that comes from such parents will be inadequate and embracing as it will no doubt lead to early sex of the children. Bird, negating this submission, comes up with some research that more than three-quarters of young people who underwent teaching on how to handle sex did not experience early sex experimentation (1983,30). This suggests that appropriateness is needed when sex education is employed.

Furthermore, Greenfield (1983,18-19) reports whether public schools should take over sex education. He submits that facts without moral and spiritual dimensions are likely to be taught in schools, increasing the youths' promiscuous level. In this light, Templar (2008,149) stresses that you should not rely on the school to give your child anything useful except information. Thus, Ayonrinde (1982,5)

states that many teachers are incompetent in giving sex education because they do not want the blame for spoiling the youths from the parents and guardians. The fear of incompetence of these teachers is dangerous, creating loopholes leading to problems facing the smooth running of sex education.

The opinion of J.H. Law is worth nothing when he remarks that the secular nature of today's schools has made spiritual, ethical and moral aspects of human sexuality to be avoided. (1985,8-9). This is not far from the discovery from research by Anthony (2001,628) that young people who took a course in sex education are more likely to initiate sexual activity. It is noted that doing sex education without moral reasons and ethical restraints is dangerous for all and sundry. This is in line with Greenfield's idea that if spiritual and ethical embellishments are expunged from sex education, the intended purpose would be lost, and the result would not pay anyone (1983,19).

There is yet another danger posed to sex education which the parents should not overlook. It is peer group or peer pressure. According to Duvall, the percentage of people who draw sex education from their peers is very significant. He says the information obtained from the peers is not processed before use, which leads to problems (1969,82). It is a form of sex education that will not help anyone see the right picture of such education. This is supported by the wrong exposure young people have to different messages encouraging all kinds of sex. They derive education from books and other reading materials which do not morally guide and help them. Anofiemen (2006,90) affirms that young people are sexy and attractive through pressure influence and styles with sexually suggestive pictures. The implication is that these sources can only lead and make idolise sex.

Sex education, through its movement, has faced serious and bitterly opposing danger as Bigelow in Ologoroye (1994,37) states that sex education since its inception has not made a positive impact on society. There are what he refers to as sexual disharmonies like dishonesty and sexual immorality, which are still manifest. This opposition does not stand the test of time because the disharmonies of

life can be treated and reduced minimally by sex education, hence rendering the danger ineffective.

One final danger that should not be mentioned is that the church once believed sex was sinful and so turned dead ears to it. It is the early church fathers, according to Gudor (1989,150), who argue that original sin was passed along through sexual intercourse. This made the believers deny the body and strengthen the soul by fasting and abstaining from sex, even marital intercourse. Duval's reports from a survey once carried out on sex education testify to the foregoing that less than three percent manage to credit their score for sex education (1969,80). This result indicates that the small input from the church suggests that the home can still wake up to fulfil its duty.

Aggarwal (2006,173) has put it well quoting an educationist, "A wise father is more than a hundred school masters. A mother's face is the child's first lesson's book. Home makes the man". So, many pastors fear sex education, and most churches do nothing about it, hence contributing to the increase in immoral sex. This is anomalous, a still water that runs deep, which is to be addressed quickly to prevent the family from further sexual damage. It then leads to steps to be taken through helpful principles of which Christian parents should be conscious, especially considering the naturalness of the home, which has been given the task of educating their wards.

Underlying Principles Parents Can Adopt

The impact of the scholars is highly viewed in this section. All Christian parents who are serious with the task of parenting should take a cue from the assertion of Glenn Clark (1970,64) that every child comes into the world with what he calls "sealed orders". This expression has to do with the uniqueness and speciality of each human being as it affects the fulfilment of their destiny.

The reason behind the child's birth must be discovered and explicitly trained with the help of the Holy Spirit. Having considered the aforementioned view, the following are a few highlighted principles for the parents,

- i. **In the principle of early start, one has to be aware of how quickly children grow and develop.** They develop sexually earlier than parents' expectation, as some girls are found menstruating as early as before eleven, and boys of twelve experience nocturnal emissions. They need to know these before they start experiencing expected sexual development. Scholars opine that the best time to mention facts of human sexuality is before the puberty stage, especially at the preteen stage, following God's will. (Andrews and Andrews, 1987,42).
- ii **Principle of correct language:** According to Anthony, parents who are spirit-filled should use clear and simple instruction in a language children will understand. Using complex language will put them off, and the purpose of such a principle will not be achieved (2001). Christian parents are responsible for adequately teaching children ways to talk about their bodies and their sexuality. It is believed that the anatomic names of body parts and acceptable terms to describe sexual activities should be part of every Christian family's vocabulary (Andrews and Andrews, 1987). Parents should not shy away from this fact.
- iii. **Principle of stressing the relationship between sexuality and self-concept,** Christian parents should know that they must show children how dangerous and sinful know that sexuality cannot stand aloof; it is part of all they do, that is, feeling about themselves, relating to one another and the opposite sex. They need to know that the moment they abuse or misuse their sexuality, they harm themselves and others. Their sexual feeling is not separated from other feelings (Andrews and Andrews, 1987).

- v. **Principle of Helping Children Understand God's Purpose for Sexuality**, Children right from the onset, need to understand that the reason for creating sex has to do with the relationship, which should be legally marital in nature. Anything short of this is sinful, even though they are sexual beings. Christian parents should develop a fast understanding in children's minds that God gives sex and that they will be responsible for the way it is used. They should understand that sexual feelings and urges are naturally normal; they only need to abstain from illicit sex prior to the time of marriage (Andrews and Andrews 1987,43;Nihinlola and others 2017,26). This is the only period ordained by God for sexual intercourse.
- v. **Principle of Modeling-** Christian parents are expected to be ready to do what they want children to and how to do it; care must be taken that the parents model right so they do not mislead the children (Anthony, 2001). Moreover, in the words of Harold J. Sala, "... Our examples have to be lived out day by day as we face the realities of living in a broken, sinful world" (2001,81). In his submission to the above, Curt Bradford gives three ways by which children can be modelled: (a) modelling personal discipline that children should follow is needed by the parents in order not to be hypocritical; (b) modelling character traits should be adopted and practised, and (c) parents should not forget to model love (1986,20-21).
- vi. **Principle of Firmness and Consistence:** Parents must ensure that they are firm and consistent in meeting the needs of their little ones. When parents respond consistently daily, the child knows what to expect. The two parents must be consistent in their relationship with the child. When parents are not in agreement, a child discovers an inconsistency in the family (Anthony, 2001).

Conclusion

The concern of this paper has been a discussion on family where Christian parents are expected to see sex education as part of the parenting care they are given. The authors have advised all parents who are in the position to educate their children on the biblical meaning of sex in relation to the whole life to do so, emphasising the issue both spiritually, morally, and biologically. One can boldly say that the home remains the natural environment a child will find very easy to relate to and enjoy. This relationship allows the right fellowship between the parents and their children to teach and learn all issues that should be open to everybody in the home. Once the children are well grounded and shown how to live rightly, God will help them not depart from it. Therefore, to choose and live well will not be difficult.

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