

HOW THE CHURCH CAN HELP: Transforming Sex Education in and through the Church

“Scripture speaks of virgins and a Virgin Birth, of the erotic and the carnal, of heterosexual and homosexual behaviors, of the body and the flesh. Does the youth group your son or daughter attends ever address these issues? If not, the morning paper does, the evening television news does, the weekly news magazines do, their peers do, and their schools may. . . Do the churches have a heart for teenagers, who live in a sex-laden atmosphere? If so, if our teenagers are to be light and salt in their own environment, someone must help them make sense of sexuality.”

Christian Medical & Dental Society¹

As a church leader you need to

- integrate sex education into your preaching and teaching
 - train lay leaders of your church (i) to encourage and equip parents to teach their own children and (ii) to supplement parental sex education
 - challenge the members of your congregation to find ways of reaching out to the community with this same teaching in order to counteract the destructive messages all teens are receiving from society
1. Hold *classes and discussion groups* for parents to challenge them and help them to become more effective in teaching their children about sex and relationships and to give them an opportunity to share concerns and issues with other parents.
 2. *Supplement parents’ teaching* on sexuality through:
 - a) preaching
 - b) small group ministry (youth group, Sunday School)
 - c) inter-generational family ministry
 - d) training teens and adults to counter popular misconceptions by providing them with sound, research-based information and practice in discussing and debating important issues
 3. *Involve parents* whenever possible in what you do with teens. When parents are involved, communication with their teens improves and teens are less likely to become involved in sexual activities.
 4. Organize *seminars*, either on your own or in cooperation with other churches, for parents, for others involved in the sex education of your teens, for the community.
 5. *Focus on husbands and fathers*. If the hearts of men are changed to value women and to accept the responsibilities of fatherhood, then boys will learn to treat girls with respect and girls will not need to seek the affections of boys in order to have the male contact they want and need.
 6. Develop *positive peer pressure* (youth groups, Sunday School) in which you:
 - a) emphasize healthy social interaction between the sexes
 - b) provide guidelines (in discussion with parents) for dating
 - c) provide regular opportunities for teens to make a *public commitment* to sexual purity. “True Love Waits” <http://www.lifeway.com/tlw/> is one way to do this.
 - d) discuss sexual issues and problems

¹ Lewis Penhall Bird, “Why the Church Should Teach Teens about Sex,” *Christian Medical and Dental Society Ethics Position Statements Online*. www.cmdahome.org

7. Organize a *weekend retreat* for teens (separately for boys and girls) in which you:
 - a) provide information
 - b) discuss the meaning of healthy sexuality in the teen years and how they can achieve this
 - c) discuss the benefits of abstinence and the consequences of premature sexual activity
 - d) challenge them to commit to save sex for marriage
8. Encourage all the members of your church *care for and lovingly confront* each other when necessary on sexual issues, speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:15-16). Teens should hold each other accountable, and adults should not ignore warning signs that a teen is headed for trouble.
9. Provide *hope* for all individuals in all situations:
 - a) It is indeed possible to postpone sex until marriage and at the same time enjoy healthy boy-girl relationships.
 - b) No situation is without hope; it is always possible to start over.
10. Provide *love and forgiveness* for those who have not remained sexually pure (Gal 6:1).
11. Provide *alternative activities* such as opportunities for service and opportunities to sacrifice.
12. *Address current issues* as they arise in the congregation or in the media. Seize every opportunity to correct misinformation and to give teens and adults alike the facts they need to support their stand on sexual purity.
13. Find ways to use the public *media* (print, radio, television) to broaden the reach of the abstinence message. Waiting Teen Media www.waitingteen.com offers affordable advertising tools that can be customized.
14. Build up a library of *resources* on teen sexuality and regularly refer parents and teens to these resources.
15. Display *pamphlets and posters* on sex and relationships in the church. Keep the Christian message about sex constantly before the eyes of teens to counteract the wrong messages with which they are constantly being bombarded in society.
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____

19. _____

20. _____