

**SEXUALITY: A DECISION MAKING MODEL FOR
ADOLESCENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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A MINI-THESIS SUBMITTED FOR

CHL4400

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

For the 4 year BTh Degree

in

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: MORAL RENEWAL

at the

SOUTH AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

DECEMBER 2008

SUPERVISOR: PELHAM LESSING

SUMMARY

A study has been done to determine and recommend a decision-making model with regards to sexuality for adolescents in South Africa. The purpose of the study was to suggest what is the most helpful and effective way for the church to teach biblical sexuality to teenagers in South Africa.

The sexual activity and the sexual struggles of adolescents in South Africa have been outlined; and the neurobiological development of teenagers with regards to decision-making has been researched.

Suggestions have been made about what the church should focus on when teaching, equipping and guiding adolescents in sexual behaviour and decision-making.

Recommendations have been made about how the church can effectively educate and minister to adolescents in a sex-drenched society. A decision making model has been included to guide adolescents towards responsible decision making regarding romantic relationships and sexual activity in this critical life stage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My husband, Maurice, thank you for your continued support and Christ-like love. Thank you for believing in me and in the call of God upon my life. I love you.

My parents, Robert and Georgia Sheppard, thank you for your love and prayers. Thank you for the way you raised me and guided me to embrace womanhood and God's will for romance in my life. I honour you.

My son, Joel-David, thank you for your inspiration. I pray that you will grow up to be a secure and mature man of God whose life will be a pleasing sacrifice unto God and a testimony of God's love unto all men. I believe in you.

My supervisor, Pelham Lessing, thank you for your encouragement, expertise and friendship. I appreciate you.

Timothy Ministry Team, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be a student again. It's a privilege to be part of TMT. Jean-Pierre Roos and Jurie Kriel, thank you for leading and training me through your lives. I respect you.

My God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, thank you for grace. I am in awe of Your obedience to the Father. I worship You.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Juliette Ras', is written over a horizontal line.

Juliette Ras

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Title

SEXUALITY: A DECISION MAKING MODEL FOR ADOLESCENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

1.1 Background

In South Africa 18% of young people have their first sexual encounter between age 13 and 15, 50% between age 16 and 18, 53% of the population is under the age of 25, and there are 5,1 million teenagers (11 to 18 years of age) in South Africa (Silver Ring Thing 2008:2).

Since the sexual revolution in the 1960's and 70's and especially in the past quarter century since the 1980's, society has witnessed significant changes in the cultural and religious understandings of sex roles, sex outside marriage, homosexuality, single-parent families, the explicit portrayal and discussion of sexual matters and sexuality in general. For the past twenty years the mainstream entertainment and advertisement industry has placed promiscuous sex at the centre of its programming philosophy. Today teenagers agree that sex is "all over the place" (News24 2000:¶20). Adults in both secular and religious circles are debating the issue of how to properly educate adolescents about this topic. I believe that there is due cause for urgency in this debate.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has been identified as the most important global health crisis with an estimated 40 million adults living with the HIV infection (Sexuality Education 2008:¶1). In 2003 about five million people in South Africa were infected with HIV, more than any other country (Carroll 2003:¶4). In South Africa, infection rates are particularly high among the youth and close to 80% of all new HIV infections are transmitted sexually (Sexuality Education 2008:¶1,2). With 40% of the

South African population below the age of 20, the HIV pandemic is driven by the sexual behaviour of teenagers (Carroll 2003:¶4). It has been established that approximately 50% of all new HIV infections are among the youth between the ages of 15-24 years (Sexuality Education 2008:¶1). Recent estimates conclude that 21% of women between the ages of 15 and 19 are HIV infected (Sexuality Education 2008:¶1). The abundant data from South Africa confirms that national patterns closely mirror international trends. Based on these alarming figures, the Declaration of Commitment on HIV set a target in 2001 to reduce HIV prevalence among young adolescence by 25% in most of the affected countries by 2005 (Sexuality Education 2008:¶1). This milestone has however not been reached. It is my opinion that the church should actively arise and set a target, not simply to reduce HIV prevalence, but to reduce promiscuous sexual activity among the youth of our country.

Teenage pregnancy is another serious problem in South Africa, with 40% of all the country's pregnancies involving girls under the age of 19 (Cullinan 2003:¶3). Some 35% of all teenage girls have had a child by the age of 19 (Cullinan 2003:¶3).

Since the year 2000, South Africa's main barrier against the wave of HIV infection has been loveLife, a national safe-sex campaign aimed to reduce HIV, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancy among the youth (Carroll 2003:¶7,13). According to David Harrison, loveLife's national programmes director, "Achieving sexual behaviour change is a complex task" (News24 2000:¶13). Furthermore Harrison said,

"In South Africa the challenge is changing an environment where adolescent promiscuity, sexual abuse and violence are the norm, compounded by adult denial of the obvious consequences of this behaviour, such as one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world" (News24 2000:¶14).

There is little hard evidence to show that current school-based approaches to HIV/AIDS education and, more generally, sexual and reproductive health and life skills education have had a significant impact on changing sexual behavior (Sexuality Education 2008:¶3). Although teenage sexual activity has been declining since 1991, the percentage of sexually active teenagers using condoms have

increased, and a recent survey shows that numbers have levelled off since 2003 (Donohoe and Peterson 2008:¶2). Across the continent, around 90% of people are well informed about the causes and consequences of HIV/AIDS (Carroll 2003:¶6). It is translating this knowledge into behaviour-change that remains a major challenge.

There are essentially two different sex education programs taught in schools globally. Comprehensive Sex Education (also called Abstinence-Based Education and Abstinence-Plus Education) teaches that abstinence is the best and most effective way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) but also teaches about contraception and safe sex to reduce the risk of pregnancies and STDs (Donohoe and Peterson 2008:¶31-33). Abstinence-Only Education (also called Abstinence-Centered Education) teaches abstinence as the only acceptable sex option for teenagers, and usually do not include information about the benefits of using contraception and condoms to prevent STDs and pregnancy (Donohoe and Peterson 2008:¶28-30). Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education teaches the same as abstinence-only education, but stresses abstinence until marriage (Donohoe and Peterson 2008:¶29).

In South Africa sexuality studies are included under the compulsory subject, Life Orientation (LO), and the prescribed text book, *Shuters Life Orientation* (First Edition 2007), have reached South African classrooms this year (Masike 2008:¶1-5). The content of *Shuters Life Orientation* has been written to cater for a profile learner at an adolescent phase of life, which is characterised by growth, confusion and experimenting (Masike 2008:¶6). It is a Comprehensive Sexual Education program and many Christian organisations have the concern that the curriculum promotes the values of the Constitution at the expense of Christian values (Smith 2005:¶1). For example, tolerance for homosexuality is included “to teach learners more on issues of tolerance, acceptance and understanding of what they perceive to be different” (Masike 2008:¶14). Homosexuality is thus viewed as a natural sexual orientation to be explored, rather than an unnatural sinful practice to be judged according to Scripture. The subject material challenges educators and learners alike to question their own belief systems and convictions with regard to sexuality. Learners are

required for academic purposes to "demonstrate an active commitment to constitutional rights" and are to be assessed on their "tolerance" (Smith 2005:¶1).

Furthermore a combination of biological and social factors exerts enormous pressure on adolescents to start having sex early (CMF 1998:¶4). The developing field of adolescent medicine stresses that adolescents are subject to fluctuating hormones and mood shifts (Maguire 2008:¶22). Early adolescents typically are resisting authority and testing boundaries (Maguire 2008:¶22). There is a narcissism in those who are attempting to understand themselves (Maguire 2008:¶22). Denial and a sense of 'I'll be OK' characterise adolescent thinking, while neither caution nor reflection is a teen forte (CMF 1998:¶21). Add to this the insecurity of adolescents about their appearance and peer acceptance. None of these factors are helpful in making mature decisions regarding sexual activity.

Adolescents today must navigate their way in a cultural morass just at a time when hormonal surges and emerging feelings are making life confusing enough. There might never have been a time when the relevance of Christian teaching and morality to human sexuality was more needed than now. And there might never have been an audience that needed to hear it more clearly and more often than teenagers.

1.2 Problem

I believe that the church has a responsibility to counteract the flood of sexual innuendo and perversion that is spewed out by the media, through teaching and exemplifying a clear biblical message that will empower young people to stand for sexual purity among their peers. The main question I will seek to resolve is: what is the most helpful and effective way for the church to teach biblical sexuality to teenagers in South Africa?

1.3 Objectives

It is proposed that a study be done to determine and recommend a decision-making model with regards to sexuality for adolescents in South Africa. The paper will offer

suggestions on how the church can effectively teach, equip and restore young people to take a public stand for sexual purity in a sex-drenched society. A secondary objective is to determine the sexual struggles of adolescents in South Africa in order to educate and minister to them more effectively.

1.4 Purpose

There is no shortage of opinions as to what will reduce unwanted pregnancy, HIV and other STDs among adolescents, nor is there a shortage of program models. What is in short supply is empirical evidence identifying components of sexual education/abstinence programmes that are effective to reduce sexual activity among teenagers. What is most needed is a Biblical decision-making model, based on scientific research, which results in a significant rise in sexual purity among teenagers. Such a study will be of immense value to churches, Christian organisations, parents and teachers who desire and need to educate and minister to teenagers in a broken and confused sexual society.

1.5 Design and Methodology

It is proposed that an empirical study be conducted, which will be combined with a literary study involving current literature on the subject of effective biblical sexual education to adolescents.

The use of the following data collection techniques may be anticipated at this stage:

1. Questionnaires: Structured self-administered questionnaires will be set up and distributed to the following groups: 5-10 churches, 3-5 Christian organisations and 10-20 adolescent individuals (including unbelievers). The questionnaires will differ to suit each group's interests and frame of reference with regards to sex education and adolescent sexual activity and attitudes.

2. Interviews: The study will utilize individual interviews with 10-20 adolescents and 3-5 Christian youth workers/educators to gain additional information about effectively teaching and ministering to adolescents regarding sexuality.
3. The use of documentation: Documentation such as magazine articles, newspaper and media reports, surveys and other relevant information available on the internet will be collected and integrated with the data obtained. The documentary sources will be used and compared with data gathered through questionnaires and interviews.
4. A decision-making model will be proposed to serve as a frame of reference to assist adolescents when confronted with sexual desires, hormonal and chemical imbalances, temptation and peer pressure in a post-modern, post apartheid, democratic SA.

1.6 Hypothesis

I believe that adolescents who have received and continue to receive the love of their heavenly Father, the forgiveness and identity of a new life in Christ, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit are better equipped to choose sexual purity than the general population. When the concept of abstinence is taught, it should be connected to a larger Christian and Biblical worldview that helps teenagers to see the sacredness and beauty of sex and marriage as intended by God. Adolescents need to see themselves as worthy image bearers of God and see their bodies as valuable temples of the Holy Spirit. I believe that teenagers not only need, but desperately desire to hear the eternal truth centered in the gospel of Jesus Christ. This truth will not only restore a hopeless generation but empower them to live lives of significant holiness in a sexually confused society.

Structure and Timeframe

<i>Chapter Title</i>	<i>Chapter Description</i>	<i>Target Date</i>
1. Introduction	▪ Research Proposal	04/08/08
2. Present Situation	▪ The sexual struggles of adolescents in South Africa. (Literature review)	09/09/08
3. Preferred Scenario	▪ Biblical and Christian sexuality applied to adolescents.	20/10/08
4. Practical Solutions	▪ A cohesive and effective theology of sexuality. (Decision-making model)	24/11/08
5. Conclusion	▪ Summary	05/12/08

Chapter 2

2. PRESENT SITUATION

2.1 Introduction

In order to educate and minister to adolescents effectively, the church needs to consider the present situation with regards to teen sexuality in South Africa. In this chapter the sexual activity and the sexual struggles of adolescents in South Africa will be outlined, including the influence of religion upon adolescent decision making regarding sexuality. Furthermore, the neurobiological development of teenagers with regards to decision-making will be explored.

2.2 Sexual Activity among Adolescents in South Africa

For teenagers the issue of sex is a minefield of confusion and social pressure that leaves them with extremely tough choices to make. The statistics point to the reality: a national survey done in 2003 showed that nearly half (48%) of 15-19 year olds were sexually experienced (have had sexual intercourse) and there were no differences between genders (National Survey 2003:8). The national survey was conducted by the Reproductive Health Research Unit of the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa for the loveLife consortium in partnership with the Medical Research Council of South Africa (National Survey 2003:2). Among sexually experienced youth, 6% reported having been forced to have sexual intercourse; that is 10% among females and 2% among males (National Survey 2003:12). Three in ten (30%) of sexually experienced females reported really wanting their first sexual experience compared to 83% of sexually experienced young males (National Survey 2003:12). Among sexually experienced young people, 35% indicated that they have had one lifetime sexual partner (National Survey 2003:13). Sexually experienced men were significantly less likely than women to report one lifetime sexual partner (24% vs. 45%) and the number of

lifetime sexual partners increased with age among males and females (National Survey 2003:13). The median age of first sex among those who reported being sexually experienced was 17 years (National Survey 2003:8).

In the same year research were done in Cape Town, led by Professor Alan Flisher, head of the University of Cape Town's department of psychiatry and mental health (Caelers 2005:¶11). The pupils canvassed were in Grades 8 to 11, from 39 high schools (Caelers 2005:¶13). A total of 23.4% reported having had sex by age 14, the figure jumped to 34.5% by age 15, 45.9% by age 16, 53.7% by age 17, 58.3% by age 18 and nearly 70% by the age of 20 (Caelers 2005:¶14). At age 14, the proportions between boys and girls were 24% for boys and 5.5% for girls, which increased by age 19 to 72% for boys and 58 % for girls (Caelers 2005:¶11-12). Among girls there was a significant increase in sexual activity between the ages of 14 and 15. At 14, 5.5% of girls said they had experienced sex, just a year older that figure was up to 14%, and by 18, just under half the girls had experienced sex (Caelers2005:¶15).

2.3 The Sexual Struggles of Adolescents

A combination of biological and social factors exerts enormous pressure on adolescents to start having sex early.

The onset of puberty brings with it a growing sexual awareness and desire. The average age at onset of puberty has been declining in most regions as a consequence of improved nutrition (Maguire 2008:¶4). The age of onset of puberty varies widely. Researchers have discovered that in suburban and urban areas where the socio-economical background is more favourable and nutrition and stress factors are less dominant girls may reach puberty earlier than girls who are of a lower socio-economical background. Only forty years ago the average age for the onset of puberty was fourteen, today it can start as early as ten years for girls and age twelve for boys (CMF 1998:¶5). For most adolescents, the physical ability to have sex arrives long before the psychological ability and emotional maturity to be a committed and loving partner (CMF 1998:¶5).

Not only do young people mature faster physically, but they also grow faster intellectually than in times past (Durfield and Durfield 2004:23). They certainly have more access to information about sex, and most teenagers would rather search the internet if they want to find more information about a topic than ask their parents or an informed adult about it. Yet, young people seem to be maturing emotionally and socially more slowly than their parents did (Durfield and Durfield 2004:23). This can be seen in the tide of violence, immorality and despair engulfing teens today. Although young adolescents can apply formal operational thinking skills to their schoolwork, they often are not able to do the same when it comes to personal dilemmas or moral issues. This is because when emotions are involved, teenagers may be unable to treat possibilities as real entities (Ariganjoye and Daigneault 2008:§2). For example, they will struggle with a question about whether someone should report a friend for breaking a rule, because their values of friendship and honesty might conflict. The decline in emotional maturing in adolescents might be because of less contact with adults due to absent parents, busy family schedules, and the fact that more and more kids spend most of their time with peers and the media.

On the other end, the waiting period until marriage has increased, with many people delaying that commitment until their mid- to late twenties or early thirties (Durfield and Durfield 2004:23). The average age of marriage has increased from 20 for girls and 23 for boys in 1950 to 25 for girls and 27 for boys in 1998 (Maguire 2008:¶4). Today an interlude of ten to twenty years between the time of sexual awakening and marriage is not uncommon (Durfield and Durfield 2004:23).

The media has a big influence on sexual behaviour of teenagers today, reaching the saturation point with material that only a generation ago would have been labelled pornography (Durfield and Durfield 2004:23). Our contemporary culture relentlessly preaches a message of sexual immorality, undermining the traditional conviction that sex should be reserved for marriage. Television, movies, the internet, popular music, teen novels and magazines all combine to project sex as a status symbol and the primary reason for living (CMF 1998:¶6). This causes adolescents to daily hear countless seductive voices insisting that casual sex is normal and desirable, and that

society has no firm moral standards by which to judge sexual behaviour (Durfield and Durfield 2004:23).

The easy availability and widespread promotion of contraception among teenagers also contributes to early teen sex in South Africa. The 'pill' arrived in the early 1960's (CMF 1998:¶7). Since then mankind have been able to separate sex from reproduction with a high degree of reliability and safety. This has inevitably had a marked effect on sexual behaviour. One early pill user described the transformation of her new-found sexual lifestyle as follows, "Promiscuity becomes as easy as the next cigarette" (CMF 1998:¶7). Carol Bower, executive director of Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (Rapcan), voiced why most government based sex education programmes promote use of condoms (safe/protected sex) to teenagers: "You can't stop teenagers from experimenting, though I'm not saying for a minute that sex is what they should be doing, but there is a pervasive atmosphere of sexuality in South Africa" (Caelers 2005:¶22).

2.4 Adolescence in South Africa

According to Bower teenagers in South Africa are making the decision to have sex for three reasons mainly: peer pressure, because they're curious, or because they want to keep a boyfriend (in the case of girls) (Caelers 2005:¶6). Dr David Harrison, chief executive officer of loveLife, lists six "big drivers to early sex in South Africa": peer pressure, coercion, sex for money, low self-esteem, pessimism and lack of communication by parents (Caelers 2005:¶10).

Peer pressure is probably regarded as the biggest factor that influences adolescents' decisions regarding sexuality in South Africa. For 10-15 year olds, their greatest concern is "about fitting in and being accepted by their peer groups" (Rabkin 2008:¶4). Particularly for girls, the attitudes of their friends influence their stance about the appropriateness of premarital sex (Mayo 1999:¶17). In reply from some teens that were asked why so early for sex, was, "it is trendy and everyone one else is doing it, so why not me?" (Carr 2008:¶6). Many teens openly admit to that of feeling pressurized to lose their virginity (Carr 2008:¶7).

Lack of communication by parents is another big factor that influences teen sexuality. In 1997, The Journal of the American Medical Association published a study that concluded that the degree of connection teenagers feel with parents and teachers is the single most important determination of whether they will engage in risky sexual activity, e.g. early sex, multiple sexual partners, unprotected sex (Gresh 2001:¶26). Despite the uneasiness felt by most pre-teens when parents bring up the subject of sex, they are very curious, and most kids this age say they prefer to learn about sex from their parents (Gresh 2001:¶15). In one study of 11- and 12-year-olds, 60 percent of the respondents wanted their parents to bring the subject up more frequently (Gresh 2001:¶15). Ultimately, it will be parents' overall relationship with their children that ingrains sexual values into their lives (Gresh 2001:¶26). Dads are particularly important in establishing life-long healthy sexual attitudes (Gresh 2001:¶27). Many studies confirm that girls who grow up without fathers are at much greater risk for early sexual activity, adolescent childbearing, divorce, and lack of sexual confidence within marriage. Many men who struggle with sexual addiction had either neglectful or abusive fathers (Gresh 2001:¶27).

Pessimism regarding their future is another factor that influences teen sexuality in South Africa. Teenagers that come from a higher social class tends to curtail sexual activity, perhaps because they have hopes and dreams for the future that seem attainable (Mayo 2008:19). Teenagers who grow up in homes where sex is presented negatively proved more likely to become involved sexually than teenagers who had been exposed to an affirming message about the appropriateness and beauty of sex and whose parents model a strong and loving marriage relationship (Mayo 2008:19,20).

Teenagers, however, are not pessimistic when it comes to the consequences of teen sexuality. According to Andrea Krauschaar, youth strategy and research director at youth consultancy Youth Dynamix Trax, young South Africans believe that they can do anything they put their minds to (Rabkin 2008:¶1,2). The youth of the 1970's were famous for being the struggle generation, while the youth of the 1980's were often called the lost generation (Rabkin 2008:¶1). Today's youth, aged between 14 and 35, is "the go-getter generation" (Rabkin 2008:¶1). They are a very

individualistic, assertive and fairly self-centered generation categorised by the phrase, "It's all about me" (Rabkin 2008:¶2).

Unfortunately, this assertiveness has not translated into sexual relationships among teenagers. According to her research, Kraushaar says that there is a feeling of invincibility among teenagers in South-Africa (Rabkin 2008:¶6). Young people don't believe anything bad can happen to them, no matter how high the risks, they believe they are immune (Gresh 2001:19). Of the young people interviewed, 87% said "many people my age are having unsafe sex" (Rabkin 2008:¶6). According to a national survey, when teenagers were asked about their risk for HIV infection, only 14% stated that they were at high risk for HIV infection; 36% stated that they were at no risk; 35% of all youth indicated that they were at small risk; and 12% indicated moderate risk (National Survey 2003:10). This despite the youth demographic being the most vulnerable to HIV statistically, especially young women (Rabkin 2008:¶7). Ironically, the overwhelming sentiment among young people is that they are "sick and tired of hearing about AIDS" (Rabkin 2008:¶8). Throwing scary statistics about teen pregnancy and STD's at adolescents only seems to make the forbidden seem more appealing (Gresh 2001:19).

2.5 Adolescent Decision Making

For years the American Psychological Association concluded that adults and adolescents approach decision making in the same way, and that they have the same ability to make good decisions, however substantial recent research indicates that this is simply not so (Mayo 2008:10). Neuroscience, the scientific study of the biology of the brain, has made great strides over the past decade in revealing that adolescence is a time of profound brain growth and change (Weinberger, Elvevag and Giedd 2005:11).

The National Campaign to prevent teen pregnancy in America have done research to bring understanding about the factors within adolescents themselves and their broader environment that help to determine teen sexual behavior and pregnancy (Weinberger et al 2005:5) According to their research, the brain of an early

adolescent in comparison to that of a late adolescent differs measurably in anatomy, biochemistry, and physiology (Weinberger et al 2005:11). It has been known since early in the 20th century that the age at which brain circuits become covered with myelin corresponds, more or less, to the time at which they become functionally mature and achieve their adult role (Weinberger et al 2005:19). Parts of the brain involved in sensory and motor functions such as moving the arms and the eyes are fully myelinated by the first few years of life (Weinberger et al 2005:19). Areas of the brain that process complex abstract information that influences decision making and behaviour, however, is not fully myelinated until well into the third decade of life (Weinberger et al 2005:19).

The prefrontal cortex, in the brain's frontal lobe (front outer mantle) is responsible for the executive functions of the brain, such as making decisions, inhibiting inappropriate behaviour, initiating appropriate behaviour, setting priorities, organizing plans and ideas, forming strategies, insight, and controlling impulses (Weinberger et al 2005:11,25). This region, which is one of the last areas of the brain to fully mature, is critical for learning and memory of such concepts as rules, laws, and codes of social conduct (Weinberger et al 2005:11,12). It is as if the cells change their architecture in order to meet the increasingly difficult cognitive and emotional challenges of adolescence and by the end of the twenties, brain functions reach an adult pattern that persist until old age, which reveals and allows increasing maturity in thought and action (Weinberger et al 2005:12).

One key MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) study found that when identifying emotions expressed on faces, teens more often activated their amygdale, the brain area that experiences fear, threat and danger, whereas adults more often activated their prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain linked more to reason and judgment, and performed better on the task (Weinberger et al 2005:12). Behaviourally, the adult's responses were more intellectual, the teens' more emotional, or from the gut (Weinberger et al 2005:12). These findings suggest that although the plasticity and changeability of the adolescent brain are extremely well suited to meet the demands

of teen life, guidance from parents and other adult institutions are essential while decision-making circuitry is being formed (Weinberger et al 2005:12).

Another key study with regards to decision making was done where there was damage to the lower middle portion of the adult prefrontal cortex. Damage to the prefrontal cortex appears to impair the ability to imagine the future consequences of actions or to appropriately gauge their emotional significance; therefore people with such damage tend to make decisions on the basis of immediate reward (Weinberger et al 2005:13). Further study also revealed that adolescents are prone to certain types of flawed logic or to ignoring cues about how questions are framed in their decision-making (Weinberger et al 2005:13). Adolescents' limited cognitive ability to simultaneously process information about antecedents and outcomes, hold it in working memory, and use it to make decisions, is partly traceable to brain circuitry not fully developed and still under construction, particularly in the prefrontal cortex of the frontal lobes (Weinberger et al 2005:13).

At a minimum, this new field of research suggests that neurobiological factors should be one part of the wider universe of factors that are considered when trying to understand and guide teen sexual behavior and decision-making. In addition, these findings are consistent with the view that adolescents may fare best in environments where there are limited options, an appropriate degree of structure and guidance, ample adult involvement and where opportunities exist for growth and learning (Weinberger et al 2005:6). The research does not suggest that young people are incompetent or that they lack capacity for making good decisions (Weinberger et al 2005:7). As Jay Giedd himself has said, "Teenagers are capable of enormous intellectual and artistic accomplishments, but the basic part of the brain that gives us strategies and organizing and perhaps warns us of potential consequences is not fully on board yet" (Weinberger et al 2005:7).

The following was revealed when teenagers were asked to participate in a moral decision-making experiment (Mayo 2008:11):

- Teenagers were less capable of seeing the solution from the perspective of others.
- A younger teen, more often than an older teen or adult, is more likely to consult a variety of people when wrestling with a decision.
- Teens making pregnancy decisions and estimating their ability to have and raise a child use different criteria than adults.
- Adolescents are less likely to consider the future and less likely to procrastinate in making decisions than an adult.
- Adult response to stimuli tends to be more intellectual, while teens' is often more emotional (Weinberger et al 2005:14).

The sex hormones estrogen and testosterone, released with hormonal changes that occur during puberty, also have an influence on the genetic regulation of cell metabolism (Weinberger et al 2005:19). Furthermore, the neurobiological effects of infatuation, especially common in teenage years, have been researched and identified. When we come into contact with a person who highly attracts us, our brain becomes saturated with a love cocktail comprised of PEA (phenylethylamine), which is a naturally occurring, amphetamine-like neurotransmitter, and several other excitatory neurotransmitters, including dopamine and norepinephrine, that triggers incredible side effects (Love 2001:1). Our limbic system is flooded with a powerful chemical concoction, so powerful that scientists now believe that the euphoria of infatuation is an altered state of consciousness (Love 2001:1).

These factors are not helpful when adolescents are making decisions regarding sexuality. Evidently, adolescents, however competent, are not adults yet. The brain's circuitry involved in assessing risk, making long-range plans, and controlling impulses, are still under construction (Weinberger et al 2005:22). Adolescents have a pressing need for mature adult guidance in this critical life stage.

2.6 The Influence of Religion

Although Christian-based resources and appropriate information about sexual functioning statistically increase the chance of responsible sexual behaviour, the truth is that neither spiritual orientation nor religious context provides ironclad protection from misuse of sexuality by others or oneself (Mayo 2008:20). "Because I believe, this can't or won't happen to me" is a simplistic message that has tripped up many pastors, youth workers and naive young people. It has been proved that the more unclear and fuzzy a church makes its teaching on sexuality, the less impact church involvement will have on a teenager (Mayo 2008:20). In other words, adolescents will be less susceptible to cultural influences if they clearly understand the Biblical alternative and embrace it. One ironic observation about the effect of religion on adolescent sexuality is that church-attending teens that do become sexually active are less likely to use contraceptive devices or to seek medical attention in choosing a birth-control method (Mayo 2008:23). This means that sexually active church-attending teens put themselves at greater risk for pregnancy and disease than the average teenager would. Young people who know what they believe and why, and who are supported by a reference group that reinforces morality, are regularly motivated to make decisions that reflect their group's values (Mayo 2008:24). Such adolescents avoid becoming involved sexually because they see meaning and purpose in not doing so.

2.7 Conclusion

The attempt to solve the puzzle of their sexuality is core to the psyche of all adolescents (Campolo 1999:¶2). Their identity, their sense of self-worth, their hopes for the future, and even their spiritual destinies are inexorably linked to their sexual struggles. Many would claim that the sexual scene is basically the same today as it has always been. However, sexual struggles of adolescents in our society are far greater than even a decade ago. Furthermore, something that has changed dramatically is sexual behaviour among adolescents. The great numbers of those

who indulge in and are victims to teen sex in South Africa are alarming and a big reason for concern. In an environment that offers conflicting choices, adolescents have a pressing need for mature adult guidance to understand cause and effect, to plan for the future, to manage impulses and to reject temptations that are not consistent with mature, long-term goals (Weinberger et al 2005:16). The church has a responsibility to respond appropriately to the present situation and guide adolescents in making decisions regarding their sexuality that will result in freedom and hope on a physical, emotional and spiritual level.

Chapter 3

3. PREFERRED SCENARIO

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter suggestions will be made about what the church should focus on when teaching, equipping and guiding adolescents in sexual behaviour and decision-making. The following topics will be addressed: finding a biblical and Christian sexual identity, celebrating singleness, pursuing purposeful romantic relationships, understanding the difference between love and infatuation, embracing a biblical standard of holiness and submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

3.2 Christian Sexual Identity

Our sexuality is at the core of who we are as human beings. When addressing young people about the topic of sexuality, it's important to emphasize that sexual desire and attraction is healthy (Durfield and Durfield 2004:145). When we are attracted to someone of the opposite sex, it's not because there's something wrong with us, but because there's something right with us (Durfield and Durfield 2004:145). The Biblical understanding of humanity as being created in God's image forms an important basis for a Christian understanding of sexuality (UCP 1997:9). In Genesis 1:26-31 God created mankind, male and female, in His image and likeness to represent Him. Every human being is thus created by God to be either male or female (UCP 1997:9). The creation account portrays sexuality as good and ordained by God (UCP 1997:9). This understanding is developed in Genesis 2:24-25 with the first uniting, i.e. marriage, of man and woman that experienced sexual intimacy without shame (Pipps 2004:1). In God's design, our sexuality is a reflection of the fact that we are created in His image, and it is intended to be enjoyed and expressed fully within the context of a marriage relationship with someone of the opposite sex (Pipps 2004:1).

We experience humanity in its fallen and incomplete state, which makes us vulnerable to sexual temptation and sin. It is important that adolescents realise that it is not sinful to experience sexual desire. However, when we want to satisfy our desires in ways outside of God's will, we may fall into sin. James 1:14-15 indicate that we are drawn away into temptation when our desires are enticed. The word "enticed" in the original Greek means "to bait a hook", in order to hide it (Wiersbe 1996:§James 1:14). Temptation comes in a deceitful package, but we have a choice whether we are going to "bite into the hook" through disobedience. Whenever we are faced with temptation, our feelings and desires makes us vulnerable to fall into sin. However, if we take our eyes off the bait, because we know there is a hook (the consequence of sin is death), we can overcome temptation (James 1:15). In order to recognise the hook, we need a biblical understanding of sexuality. We need to find our sexual identity in the image of God and we need to honour the marriage covenant in our expression of our sexuality (Heb.13:4).

Our humanity finds its fulfilment in being transformed by the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ through salvation (UCP 1997:9,10). Through a living relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the perfect image of God, we find our true sexual identity (2 Cor.4:4, Col.1:15). Through experiencing God's love and fellowship, and through obedience to His Word, we discover God's intention for humanity created in His image. The church possesses these truths and I believe that we have a responsibility to guide adolescents in the process of finding their sexual identity in God through an understanding of and obedience to His Word.

3.3 Celebrating Singleness

Singleness is a greatly misunderstood concept in today's culture. The word means "to be unmarried", but it is also used to refer to someone that is unattached to another in a romantic relationship and often has the connotation of being "incomplete" or even "of less value" (Munroe 2008:5). According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, to be single means to be a "separate, unique, and whole individual" (Munroe 2008:7). If a state of singleness means "to be unique and whole", then to be truly single should be every person's number one goal (Munroe 2008:11).

I believe that singleness, in the sense of being unattached to someone, is essential for adolescents to become unique and whole individuals in their own right. A major task of adolescence is to become “your own person” (Coach 2007:¶2). Ironically, in the process of becoming “their own person”, adolescents are very concerned with being popular and will do almost anything to be accepted by their peers (Coach 2007:¶11). Many adolescents fall into the trap of peer pressure for fear of being rejected. For most adolescents, the desire to become like everyone else is a much greater reality than the desire to become the unique individuals that God has called them to be. Romance is one area where adolescents experience great pressure to “fit in”. Many feel that they are somehow “incomplete” without a boyfriend or girlfriend, and that they are more valuable when they are attached to someone in a romantic relationship. Girls, especially, would often rather “become” what they think a potential boyfriend wants, than to become known as someone that is separate and unique, i.e. “the only one without a boyfriend”. Adolescents would often become involved in sexual activities within a romantic relationship because they think “everyone else is doing it”. Many adolescents are uncomfortable with being single, in the sense of being unattached, because they are uncomfortable with being single, in the sense of being separate and unique.

It is my conviction that instead of running away from being single, adolescence should be a time of pursuing and celebrating singleness for the sake of becoming whole individuals. We become truly whole when we receive what we’ve been created for: the love of God in a living relationship with Him. When young people have not yet found wholeness in God as a separate person, they continually seek for fulfilment in another human being, who cannot meet their emotional and spiritual needs (Munroe 2008:8). Although it is possible to experience temporal fulfilment in relationship with another human being, I believe that true and lasting fulfilment can only be found in God. Every person can only bring into a relationship who they are as a separate individual (Munroe 2008:34). The most successful relationships are thus the product of two people who have been successful in finding their wholeness and fulfilment in God as single people (Munroe 2008:35).

For most people, singleness (as an unmarried state) will only last for a season. Young people should be encouraged to celebrate the season of singleness through living wholeheartedly and unashamedly in the present. Our unmarried years should be viewed as a gift from God (1Cor.7:7). Singleness is a season unprecedented in opportunities to pursue and serve God wholeheartedly without distraction (1Cor.7:32-35). It is a season of our lives unmatched in its boundless opportunities for growth, learning and service (Harris 2003:44). Instead of doing something about their singleness, adolescents should be challenged to do something with their singleness: seek God and become whole in Him. Instead of being ashamed about their singleness, adolescents should be encouraged to embrace their individuality and pursue their wholeness in God. It is in pursuit of God that we find true fulfilment, and we come to a place where we don't feel we "need" to enter into a relationship due to fear of rejection, peer pressure or loneliness. It is in celebrating singleness where we find wholeness, which is the quickest and best way to prepare us for marriage.

3.4 Purposeful Romantic Relationships

I believe that it is important for the church to teach adolescents the difference between purposeful romantic relationships (courtship) and casual short term relationships (dating). Purposeful romantic relationships are entered into with a sense of commitment based upon an intention of pursuing marriage, while casual relationships are entered into with a sense of simply enjoying it "while it lasts".

The fundamental problem with most romantic relationships today is the pursuit of romance disconnected from the pursuit of commitment (Harris 2003:27). Intimacy implies openness, vulnerability and dependency, and it can be one of the most meaningful and precious aspects of any human relationship or it can be one of the most destructive and hurtful aspects of a relationship. According to God's design, the joy of intimacy is the reward of commitment (Harris 2003:28). Relationships are dynamic, and it is enriching to experience appropriate intimacy in an appropriate relationship with a friend or family member of the same or opposite sex (Harris 2003:32). However, God has made the fulfilment of romantic intimacy the by-product

of commitment-based love within the context of marriage (Harris 2003:28). Most adolescents go on dates and enter into romantic relationships because they want to enjoy the emotional and physical benefits of romantic intimacy without the responsibility of real commitment (Harris 2003:28). The results are not what they desired, instead they experienced superficial intimacy, without real joy or fulfillment (Rabey 2001:¶9). The ideal romantic relationship is started only after both individuals have expressed their intention of marital commitment to one another. This does not mean that every godly romantic relationship will necessarily lead to marriage, but if marriage is not the intention of both individuals involved, the intention is short term fulfillment and selfish pleasure. On the other hand, when a young couple have expressed their intention of marital commitment to one another, this does not mean that they can act like married people or expect marital commitment from one another. We don't own anyone outside of marriage, and until two people are married, they will do good to treat each other like they might still be someone else's future husband or wife. Young people should be encouraged and guided to wait until they are ready to pursue purposeful romantic relationships in which they can match romance with commitment.

It is difficult for many adolescents to reconcile the principle with their experience, for many want to know why multiple casual relationships are not excellent training ground for marriage? The truth is that marriage, according to God's design, is a lifelong commitment and we cannot practice lifelong commitment in a series of short-term relationships (Harris 2003:72).

3.5 Love and Infatuation

One thing that adolescents usually want to know about romance is: what are we supposed to do when we "fall in love"? This is a good time to explain to them the difference between love and infatuation. "Falling in love" is a typically sudden emotional experience we can all identify with. It will be helpful to view it from a scientific point of view and compare it with a biblical perspective on love, so that we can differentiate between love and infatuation. Scientifically, the "falling in love" experience is called infatuation, and it is the body's chemical response to attraction

(Ingrim 2008:§3). When we come into contact with a person who highly attracts us, our brain becomes saturated with a love cocktail comprised of several excitatory neurotransmitters which triggers incredible side effects (Love 2001:1). Symptoms include a delightfully positive attitude, increased energy, decreased need for sleep, loss of appetite, and a decreased ability to make decisions based on sound judgment (Love 2001:1). Infatuation comes quickly, and can disappear just as quickly (Ingrim 2008:§3). It is often based on physical attraction and can be focussed on two or more people simultaneously (Ingrim 2008:§4). Furthermore, infatuation never lasts (Ingrim 2008:§4). Infatuation, although perfectly normal, especially in our teenage years, is thus not a good foundation for a romantic relationship. Despite the shortage of exact information in this region of emotional life, the view seems established among psychologists that infatuation in romantic relationships lasts typically anything from 6 weeks to 18 months (“Developmental Psychology Textbook” in Ingrim 2008:§2). Psychologists contend that after 18 months, if the relationship lasts, it develops into a less intense, but richer 'companionate love.' If, however, a romantic relationship is broken, psychologists recommend 1 year to 18 months for the emotional recovery before entering into a new romantic relationship (Ingrim 2008:§2). It is evident why so many adolescents enter into a series of short term relationships that end in disaster and heartache.

A biblical perspective on love will help adolescents to approach relationships differently than our culture does. The English word “love” is used by most people for almost anything, from how they feel about the “special” person in their lives to how they feel about lunch. In the New Testament, there are four Greek words translated as “love”, of which I will discuss three that can be applied to romantic relationships. The first is “eros”, which can be described as the sensual/sexual love between lovers and is based on physical attraction (Ingrim 2008:§3). The second is “phileo”, which can be described as friendship love and is based on the time, activities and companionship that friends share with one another (Ingrim 2008:§3). The third is “agape”, which is a supernatural, unconditional and self-sacrificing love based on God’s love for us (Ingrim 2008:§3). I want to propose that a godly and happy marriage contains all three types of love, in the right order of importance. Many people, wrongly, think that marriage and romantic relationships are all about “eros”

love. However, a great deal of fulfilled married life is about being best friends. Furthermore, the best basis for any relationship, especially a marriage relationship, is “agape” love. In Ephesians 5:1-2, we are commanded to be imitators of God and walk in love (agape) as Christ has loved us and given Himself for us. Through the cross of Jesus Christ, God has provided for us both the example and the power to love others with the same love that God loves sinners (John 3:16, 1John 4:10-11) (Harris 2003:18). God’s love is selfless and sacrificial. Without God, our relationships will be limited to our human capacity to love others based upon our friendship or sexual attraction to another person, and it will probably follow our culture’s pattern of relationships. According to the world’s understanding of love, love is primarily a feeling, therefore many people evaluate the quality of their love for someone based on their emotional fulfillment within a relationship (Ingrim 2008:§1). Furthermore, love is believed to be for the fulfillment and comfort of self and it is viewed as something beyond our control, therefore many people are reluctant to take responsibility for anything they do or don’t do when they’re “in love” (Ingrim 2008:§1). If God’s love does not form the basis of our relationships, our understanding of love can easily become self-centred and feeling governed. As Christians, every relationship is an opportunity to love another person as Christ has loved us (Eph.5:1-2). God’s love is patient and it never fails (1Cor.13:4,8). The best way to build a relationship that will last is to build it on God’s love first. Then, according to God’s leading, a friendship can be built upon that pure and sacrificial love. Lastly, within the context of marriage, sexual love can find its expression. Adolescents need to know that they don’t have to enter into a relationship with someone just because they are infatuated or because someone else is infatuated with them. Feelings come and go, therefore, it is best to submit and surrender their feelings and desires to God in prayer and worship, and ask for His will to be done. The feelings might not, and probably will not, go away immediately, but when we choose to surrender to God, we receive grace to do His will.

3.6 A Biblical Standard of Holiness

Holiness is a chief attribute of God, which denotes that He is separate from all that is evil and defiled (Job 34:10) (Elwell and Comfort 2001:§608). His holy character is the standard of absolute moral perfection (Is 5:16). Throughout the Bible, God demanded and continues to require holiness in the lives of his people (Lv. 19:2, 2Pet.1:4). Fundamentally, holiness is separation from what is unclean and a consecration to what is pure (Elwell and Comfort 2001:§608). As a result of salvation, we are made holy in God's sight (positional sanctification), we are called to become holy in our personal lives (progressive sanctification) and we can look forward to being perfected in holiness in heaven or when Jesus returns (prospective sanctification). Our focus in our daily lives should be to become progressively more holy and Christlike (Rom.8:29). Personal holiness is a work of gradual development and is derived from and dependent upon a close relationship with God (Elwell and Comfort 2001:§608).

Adolescence is a stage where many begin to question the standards of morality handed down to them by authority figures, such as parents, teachers or other adults (Ariganjoye and Daigneault 2008:§2). They often embrace the behaviours and beliefs of friends. Belonging to a group of peers also allows them to avoid feeling guilty over moral infractions by shifting responsibility from the individual to the group (Ariganjoye and Daigneault 2008:§2). At this critical stage, I believe it is important to challenge adolescents to embrace God's standard of holiness as a personal conviction. Instead of trying to get away with sin without getting in trouble or getting hurt, adolescents should be encouraged to live according to a standard of holiness where they want to avoid sin and any situation that will compromise their purity and closeness to God.

A commonly asked question among adolescents with regards to sexual temptation is: "How far is too far?" When young people ask this type of question, they usually have at least two misconceptions in mind about how their sexuality is designed (Durfield and Durfield 2004:145,146). The first misconception is that sexual foreplay, which arouses the body for intercourse, can be easily stopped at any point once it's

begun (Durfield and Durfield 2004:146). The second misconception is the notion that coitus (penetration) is the only sex in the strict sense of the word, and any other kinds of sexual activity are somehow less dangerous or not as immoral (Durfield and Durfield 2004:146). When addressing these misconceptions it is best to point out the danger of sexual arousal through comparison. One example that can be used is accelerating a car in a residential area (Durfield and Durfield 2004:146). If you drive down a neighbourhood street at the high speed of 100 km/h and a child runs out in front of you, you'll probably hit the child. No matter how hard you press down the brake or how sincere your intention of stopping the car in time, a tragic outcome is nearly inevitable because of the choice you already made earlier – when you chose to exceed the speed limit in a residential area. Another example is starting a fire outside of a fireplace. If you make a fire inside a protected fireplace, it's creates a cosy atmosphere and warms you on a cold winter night. However, if you start a fire somewhere else, even as close as the carpet in front of the fireplace, the chances are good that something will be destroyed and someone will get hurt in the process. The fireplace is the appropriate place to start a fire; the highway is the appropriate place to accelerate a car; and marriage is the appropriate place for sexual arousal. In Song of Solomon, the Bible extols the beauty and purity of marital love by celebrating both the emotional and physical aspects of marriage (Willmington 1997:§349). The refrain “do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases” are repeated three times in the book of Song of Solomon (2:7, 3:5, 8:4). In these verses, the Shulammitte addressed the young virgins of the royal court concerning the importance of remaining chaste prior to marriage. The words “awaken love” can better be rendered “arouse the sexual expression of love,” while “until it pleases,” can be interpreted, “until it is with the right person within the bounds of marriage” (Hughes and Laney 2001:§250). This is a solemn charge “by the gazelles or by the does of the field”, which refers to wild animals that are created to be free and are not supposed to be tamed. Similarly, sexual love is not meant be tamed; it is a gift of God to be expressed freely within the safe bounds of marriage. Hence, the warning against premarital sexual arousal appears three times (2:7; 3:5; 8:4) (Hughes and Laney 2001:§250). Rather than telling us where to stop sexual activity before it “goes

too far”, the Bible charges us to not even start sexual activity outside of the bounds of marriage.

There is a widespread belief among adolescents that they can engage in other forms of sex (nonvaginal), as a way to be sexually active, while still claiming that, “technically”, they are virgins (Dunham 2008:¶5). However, sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual activity really represent the same moral issue (Matt.5:27). They all have an impact on the human soul with sobering consequences, resulting in powerful feelings of bonding and – outside of marriage – guilt, shame and damaged self-esteem (Durfield and Durfield 2004:149). As a result of the physical changes of adolescence, teenagers often experience dramatic highs and lows concerning body image and self-esteem (Ariganjoye and Daigneault 2008:§2). When they experiment sexually and they do not experience the loving approval of a committed marriage partner, feelings of guilt, shame and rejection are compounded. Contrary to popular belief among adolescents, statistics have proven that sexual activity in romantic relationships does not help them to “keep a boyfriend”, but it rather accelerates relational break-ups outside of marriage. Furthermore, all sexual activities put adolescents at risk of sexually transmitted infections (Dunham 2008:¶13).

If we engage in any type of sexual activity outside of marriage, we’re sinning in that we’re dishonouring our bodies, dishonouring our future marriage partners, damaging our emotions, and corrupting our thoughts (Durfield and Durfield 2004:149). God’s standard of holiness is a pure heart and mind (Matt.5:27). A government survey examining sexual practices of US teens, published in the Journal of Adolescent Health in 2002, found that more than half of teenagers who engage in nonvaginal forms of sex, also practice sexual intercourse, undermining the notion of “technical virginity” (Dunham 2008:¶3). During other kinds of sex, in essence, sexual intercourse is committed in our heart (Matt.5:27) (Durfield and Durfield 2004:149). When sin is tolerated, it grows and gains strength (James 1:14,15) (Harris 2003:97). If we begin the progression of sin and allow it to continue, it will soon grow beyond our control. Adolescents should be encouraged to set a biblical standard of holiness where they avoid situations that could compromise the purity of their bodies or minds (Heb.13:4, 1Thess.4:3-8, Col.3:5) (Harris 2003:53). It is only by keeping our standard

of holiness high and killing sin in its infantile stage that we will avoid its destruction (Harris 2003:97).

3.7 The Lordship of Jesus Christ

I believe that the biggest challenge for adolescents is to fully submit their love lives to God. The predominant theme in teenagers' decision making is: 'What's in it for me?' This typical selfishness can be seen in the type of questions teenagers usually ask before entering into a romantic relationship: 'Will this be fun?' 'Does this feel right?' 'Is this what I really want?' 'What can I learn from this?' 'Will this make me happy?' Adolescents should be encouraged to rather ask the following type of questions before entering into a romantic relationship: 'Is this God's will for me now?' 'Is this the right person for me?' 'Is this the right time for me?' 'What does God say?'

We can only really find out what God wants for us if we are willing to accept and obey whatever He says. Until our will and affections are brought under the authority of Christ, we have not begun to understand, let alone accept, the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Elliot 1984:39). We need to come to a place where what we want does not matter to us as much as what He wants. When adolescents accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ over their lives, it empowers them to live above their emotions and desires and experience true fulfilment in relationship with God. Submission to God's authority then later becomes the foundation for pleasing God within their romantic relationships. It influences the practical everyday decisions of where, when, how, why and with whom they choose to be (Harris 2003:91). "When the will of God crosses the will of man, somebody has to die" (Addison Leitch in Elliot 1984:72). However, it is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life (John 12:25).

Adolescents can be encouraged through the example of Abraham's obedience to God to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac (Gen.22). Abraham obeyed God as an act of worship unto the Lord (Gen.22:5), and the place of sacrifice became the place of God's provision (Gen.22:14). Abraham is an example to us of what it means to fear God and to trust in His goodness (Gen.22:8,12). We need to come to a place where we fear God more than we desire anything else; and where we trust that what He commands is the best for us. Furthermore, when we sacrifice what we "love", we

need to truly sacrifice; not only outwardly, but in our hearts. We cannot expect God to give back to us what we've sacrificed, just because He did it for Abraham. God will provide in His own way and His own time what He knows is best for us. Adolescents can be encouraged that in laying down our own desires for God's will, we gain something that far exceeds our greatest desires. When we choose God's will and God's way in God's time above our own, we will experience the reward of joy and fulfilment that will last.

3.8 Conclusion

In an age of sexual confusion and immorality the church needs to proclaim a message of God's love that will empower adolescents towards purity. Although it is possible for people who do not have a living relationship with Jesus Christ to uphold Christian principles and abstain from premarital sexual activity, it is only within a love relationship with God that we truly find our sexual identity and our purpose for existing. Adolescents need an understanding of God's love and His dream for their lives which will give them the internal motivation to sacrifice short-term pleasures for the sake of receiving His long-term rewards. Adolescents need a purpose in life in order to stay on track (Durfield and Durfield 2004:176). Instead of being a time of hopeless seeking acceptance in multiple romantic relationships, adolescence should be a time of celebrating the season of singleness by pursuing God wholeheartedly. Young people should be encouraged to trust God to lead them to the right person in the right time, in order to pursue purposeful romantic relationships based on God's love. It is in accepting the Lordship of Jesus Christ over every area of their lives, and in embracing His standard of holiness, that they will avoid the destruction of living life according to their own sinful desires. Adolescents should be guided to mature to the place where the values they cherish aren't borrowed from parents or others, but rather belong to them personally (Durfield and Durfield 2004:177). I believe that the church has a responsibility to guide young people to a place where they can discern God's will for themselves and make mature decisions that will result in true freedom and fulfilment.

Chapter 4

5. PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter recommendations will be made about how the church can effectively educate and minister to adolescents in a sex-drenched society. A decision making model are included to guide adolescents towards responsible decision making regarding romantic relationships and sexual activity in this critical life stage. Final recommendations will be made about how to teach adolescents effectively.

4.2 Effective Sex Education

Advocates for Youth in 2003 (Washington, DC) has revealed that effective Sex Education programs share the following characteristics (Kirby 2008:¶1):

Effective Sex Education programs:

- Deliver and consistently reinforce a clear message, whether that is abstaining from sexual activity or using condoms or other forms of contraception. This appears to be one of the more important characteristics distinguishing effective from ineffective programs.
- Have clear goals (e.g. to prevent HIV and teen pregnancy).
- Provide basic and accurate information about the risks of teen sexual activity.
- Include activities that address social pressures that influence sexual behaviour.
- Provide examples of and assist youth to develop skills in communication, refusal and negotiation.
- Incorporate behavioural goals, teaching methods, and materials that are appropriate to the age, sexual experience, and culture of the students in a safe environment for participants.

- Are developed in cooperation with members of the target community, especially young people.
- Assist youth to clarify their individual, family, and community values.
- Employ teaching methods designed to involve participants and have participants personalize the information.
- Select teachers or peer leaders who believe in the program and then provide them with adequate training.
- Last a sufficient length of time (i.e., more than a few hours). Generally speaking, short-term curricula, whether abstinence-only or comprehensive sexuality education programs, do not have measurable impact on the behaviour of teens.

I believe that it is important for the church to keep these characteristics in mind so that we can minister to adolescents effectively. I suggest that a clear message of abstinence before marriage is delivered consistently and repeatedly to the youth by people who believe in the message. It is important to involve adolescents and to keep the message appropriate to their age and sexual experience.

4.3 A Vision for Purposeful Romantic Relationships

When speaking to young people about purposeful romantic relationships (leading to marriage), it is wise to guide them to arrive at the desired conclusion themselves. We can tell them that they should not pursue intimacy in a romantic relationship before they are ready to pursue marriage, but if they don't see the purpose in waiting, they will probably not obey our "rules". I suggest that this issue is approached from a point of agreement (adultery in marriage) and then applied to adolescents' relationships before marriage.

Most young people have a strong conviction that adultery is sinful and hurtful to all the people involved. Most adolescents would be able to tell you in their own words why adultery is sinful and hurtful: in an adulterous relationship there is intimacy without marital commitment. While most adolescents agree that adultery is sinful, many need guidance to agree that fornication is sinful (Heb.13:4). Just because

teenagers are not married to someone in particular, they sometimes feel that they have the right to act like they want to with anyone in general. However, when they realise that they will probably be married to someone in the future, and that every other single person is potentially someone else's future husband or wife, their perspective changes. It is sinful and hurtful to have a sexual relationship with someone that you're not married to, whether that person is married to someone else, or whether that person is not married to someone in particular yet (Heb.13:4). This principle can be further applied to help adolescents discern for themselves how to treat someone of the opposite sex appropriately and how to express affections in relationships appropriately.

When adolescents are asked to consider the way they act in romantic relationships and the way they treat someone of the opposite sex, it is easy for them to discern which of those things would be inappropriate to do or say to a married person. Similarly, most of what they would consider inappropriate in relationship with someone that is married to someone else, is also inappropriate in relationship with someone that is not married to anyone specific yet. My encouragement to young people is to view every single person of the opposite sex as someone else's future husband or wife, and to treat them with the purity and respect that they would treat another man's wife or another woman's husband.

A good question that flows from this is: When would it then be appropriate to enter into a romantic relationship with someone of the opposite sex? The answer: when it is your intention to become that person's future husband or wife. Then, although the relationship is purposeful, it is not guaranteed to end in marriage, and young people should still be encouraged to treat each other with respect and purity. My encouragement to young people in romantic relationships is: Always treat one another in such a way that if the relationship should break up, each of you can look both your future spouses in the eyes and be proud of how you treated each other. Within romantic relationships, there are certain expressions of affection (like holding hands) that are appropriate and will not be regretted if the relationship breaks up. Then, there are levels of physical and emotional involvement that would steal from someone's future relationship with their husband or wife, which should be postponed

until marriage. This is where adolescents within romantic relationships need some guidance from more mature Christian people, preferably including a married couple, who can help them to protect each other's purity and to keep them accountable.

4.4 Love or Infatuation?

It is very helpful if adolescents understand the difference between true love and being "in love". See **Addendum A** for a table with questions and answers that can be used to help adolescents differentiate between love and infatuation. These questions are set up based on a test adapted from Ingrim (2008:3,4) in *Love, Sex and Lasting Relationship*. These questions can be applied to adolescents who are contemplating entering into a romantic relationship, or to those who are already in a romantic relationship. After explaining to them the scientific and biblical difference between love and infatuation, these questions can be used to encourage them to build relationships on love and not infatuation.

The purpose of these questions is to help adolescents come to the realisation themselves that infatuation is a fleeting experience, and thus not a good foundation on which to build a lasting relationship. When adolescents answer questions like, "How long did it take to fall in love?" and "How well do I know this person?", it helps them to determine the depth of their feelings. Questions like "Am I willing to work and make sacrifices for the sake of the relationship?" and "How will I/do I approach problems in the relationship?" are good indicators of whether adolescents view the relationship as a short term or long term relationship. When adolescents desire a long term relationship that is in God's will for their future, they see purpose in making sacrifices now (like focussing on their studies) for the sake of investing in their future and enjoying the benefits of their work in a long term relationship later. They are also more alert to approach potential problems and differences intelligently in order to solve them. On the other hand, adolescents who are infatuated often focus all their attention on an idealised picture of the other person, and are either irritated with the imperfections of reality, or ignore and deny them completely. Another important factor to question is the role that physical attraction and involvement plays in a relationship. For teenagers, infatuation is often based on physical attraction, and

within romantic relationships, it is often dependent upon physical involvement. They would often feel a desire to enter into a relationship, or progress in a relationship physically, for fear of losing the relationship. Once again, when adolescents have a desire to pursue a long term relationship based on love, they are willing to delay physical involvement until it can be appropriately expressed in marriage. They see purpose in building a friendship and in expressing their affections in ways that do not stir up sexual desires.

4.5 Decision Making Model

Romantic relationships are intricate and there really is no “one-size-fits-all” foolproof formula to avoid heartache or guarantee success. However, there are biblical principles and Christian values that can govern our decision-making, and help us to avoid unwanted consequences. See **Addendum B** for a decision making model that is set up to help adolescents make mature decisions by asking a series of questions with regards to romantic relationships (adapted from Harris 2000,2003). These questions are meant to be asked in combination, not isolation, so that adolescents can make their own decisions based on a variety of important factors surrounding romantic relationships.

The answers to these questions can be compared to the colours of a traffic light (adapted from Basso 2003:1), which indicate whether it is safe to proceed, better to wait until the light turns green, or best to stop. I will discuss some of the most important questions to consider regarding romantic relationships (see Addendum B for more questions, possible answers and suggested responses). Personally, I would not encourage anyone to enter into a romantic relationship until they can answer all of the questions positively, which indicates that all the lights are green and there are no red lights.

The purpose of these questions is to help adolescent answer four fundamental questions, which I believe are the primary questions underlying all of the questions surrounding romance. Although the answers to these questions may overlap in many ways, I believe that each of them addresses a very important aspect to consider before entering into a romantic relationship, as well as within romantic relationships.

Furthermore, because these are not easy questions to answer, a series of questions (with possible answers and suggested responses) are set up to help adolescents answer these primary questions easier (see Addendum B). I will shortly discuss each of the questions:

a) What is God's will for me?

Not all people find it easy to hear God's voice or discern His will, and even those who generally do, have times when they struggle in this area. One such time is when our emotions are involved. I am convinced that it is almost impossible to hear God's voice about anything if we are not willing to surrender our own will and emotions to His will. Because of all the emotions involved in romantic relationships, adolescents should be encouraged to seek objective guidance, and not simply trust the subjective leading of the Lord. The heart is deceitful (Jer.17:9) and it is easy to "feel" peaceful about what we think God is saying when there is something specific that our hearts want. Adolescents can be encouraged through Christ's example in the Garden of Gethsemane to sacrifice what they want in order to please the Father through obedience (Matt.26:36-42). If we surrender what we want to Him, and make up our minds that we will be obedient to His will, whatever it is, no matter how difficult it may be, it becomes easier to hear His voice clearly. My encouragement to adolescents is: keep your emotional and physical involvement behind God's leading. We can trust Him, He will not withhold anything good from those who walk according to His will (Ps.84:11).

b) Am I ready for a purposeful romantic relationship?

Many young people wrongly think that if they would just find the right person, the relationship is bound to work out, and if it does not, it probably wasn't the right person. My encouragement to young people is: instead of focussing your attention on finding the right person, focus your attention on becoming the right person. If they are not ready for marriage yet, the best thing they can do is to celebrate their singleness: seek God wholeheartedly and become a mature man or woman of character that would be "marriageable". Once again, being ready is not something that adolescents should just "feel" subjectively, but they should be encouraged to

seek objectively counsel from mature Christian leaders and parents who know them and can guide them in growing in godliness and maturity.

c) Is it the right time for me to enter in/be in a romantic relationship?

Questions like “Am I at a marriageable age?” and “Do I want to get married in the near future?” are helpful to this end. However, just because someone could get married, doesn’t mean they should. This is simply one of the important factors to consider before entering into a romantic relationship. Young people should be encouraged to seek God’s will regarding the timing of a relationship, both subjectively and objectively. My encouragement to young people is: waiting for God’s time might not be easy, but it will never be regretted. It is better to wait for God’s best, than to rush into a relationship that seems good, but does not last.

d) Is it the right person for me?

Questions like “Is this person a committed believer?” and “How does this person relate to others (like friends and authority)?” are helpful to this end. Once again, young people should be encouraged to seek God’s will, both subjectively and objectively, regarding who to marry. My encouragement to young people is: while we may look for qualities in a person that we think will make us happy, God is looking at qualities in a person that will make us holy, for He knows that is what will make us truly happy.

Finally, I believe that it is helpful to create an awareness in adolescents of the emotional (and often physical) consequences of a relational break-up. If a romantic relationship is not going to lead to a happy marriage in God, it inevitably is going to break up. Broken relationships result in broken hearts. I believe that with every broken relationship, we lose something precious of ourselves, and we get something that we did not want. I believe that the most precious gift that anyone can give to their future spouse is a pure heart: a heart that has never been broken, a heart that has never been given to someone else before, and a heart that has been kept pure from sexual sin.

4.6 Responsible Decision Making

Making responsible decisions is a very important skill for adolescents to learn, because in some situations a good or bad decision can significantly affect the rest of their lives. It is crucial that adolescents take responsibility for their decisions (Bolen 2008:¶5). The church can empower adolescents to make responsible decisions by teaching them to adopt a proactive decision making style. Below is a summary of different decision making styles that adolescents can adopt:

a) Inactive decision making

Inactive decision making is a decision making style in which someone fails to make choices, and this failure determines what will happen (Bolen 2008:¶6). Teens with this decision making style do not know what they want to do, and put off making difficult decisions. Therefore, they end up having to deal with whatever happens, and they do not gain the self-confidence they would have if they had made a decision and been accountable for it (Bolen 2008:¶6).

b) Reactive decision making

Reactive decision making is when someone allows others to make their decisions (Bolen 2008:¶7). Teens with this style of decision making are easily influenced by what others think, do, or suggest, lack self-confidence, and have a need to be liked by others (Bolen 2008:¶7).

c) Proactive decision making

A proactive decision making style is one in which someone examines the decision to be made, identify and evaluate actions they might take, select an action, and take responsibility for the consequences of this action (Bolen 2008:¶8).

Proactive decision making results in responsible decision making and can be summed up in the following decision-making model (adapted from Bolen 2008:¶10):

- a) Describe the situation that requires a decision
- b) List possible decisions you might make

- c) Share the list of possible decisions with a trusted adult, like parents and/or spiritual leader.
- d) Evaluate the consequences of each decision
- e) Decide which decision is responsible and most appropriate
- f) Act on your decision and evaluate the results by welcoming perspective from mature people.

Responsible decision making lead to actions that promote health, protect safety, follow laws, show respect for self and others, follow guidelines set by responsible adults, and demonstrate good character (Bolen 2008:¶9).

I suggest that the decision making model (Addendum A), which is set up to help adolescents make mature decisions regarding romantic relationship, is used in combination with the above decision making model and that consequences are evaluated in relationship with adolescents. Adolescents need guidance from mature adults, and therefore we need to teach them the importance of inviting perspective and accountability.

4.7 Final Recommendations

As a result of my research and experience in the area of teaching adolescents about issues of sexuality, I have compiled a brief list of recommendations to aid those who will embrace the challenge of equipping adolescents regarding biblical sexuality:

a) Be humble

When teaching adolescents, I suggest that it be done in an attitude of humility, grace and love. It is much easier for adolescents to receive from someone who have a desire to serve and equip them, than from someone who thinks that they know everything that adolescents need.

b) Be confident

When teaching adolescents, be confident in the Lord and remember that your authority lies in the Word of God. Adolescents will be inspired by someone who

believes in the message that they teach and they will be convicted by the authority of Scripture.

c) Be practical

When teaching adolescents, be sure to make the message practical. Adolescents are not too interested or impressed with statistics and theoretical information; they want to know how to apply it and if it will work.

d) Be creative

When teaching adolescents, one needs to be creative by keeping the discussion as interactive as possible. The aim is to lead them from where they are at, to where God intends them to be, by allowing them to make their own decisions.

e) Be repetitive

When teaching adolescents, it should be done patiently and repeatedly. It is probably not enough to say something once; the message should be repeatedly brought (in word and through example), preferably through more than one person, on more than once occasion, and in more than one way.

f) Be wise

When teaching adolescents, use discretion and be led by the Spirit in order to keep the message appropriate to the age and sexual experience of the audience. Most of the time, adolescents don't need too much detail or description, they need the truth to be communicated plainly.

g) Be real

When teaching adolescents, know that who you are will probably influence them more than what you say. Adolescents are inspired by real people who have a testimony of how they succeeded and failed in the same struggles that adolescents face.

4.8 Conclusion

I believe that the church can and should empower adolescents to make responsible decisions through teaching them Christian and biblical principles that can govern decision making and by being involved in their decision making process. Adolescents need to be inspired to make proactive decisions regarding romantic relationships, and they need a sense of control over their own behaviour and decisions. I believe that adolescents need more than just information; they need discipleship, guidance and accountability from mature Christian leaders, family and friends.

Chapter 5

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, the present situation, preferred scenario and practical solutions as outlined in this study will be summarized, and the study will be concluded.

5.1 Summary of Present Situation

In South Africa there are 5,1 million adolescents, of which 50% have their first sexual encounter by the age of 18 (Silver Ring Thing 2008:2). In the past quarter century society has witnessed significant changes in the cultural and religious understanding of sexuality to the extent that teenagers agree that sex is "all over the place". The HIV/AIDS epidemic has been identified as the most important global health crisis and with 40% of the South African population below the age of 20, the pandemic is driven by the sexual behaviour of teenagers (Carroll 2003:¶4). Teenage pregnancy is another serious problem in South Africa (Cullinan 2003:¶3). According to David Harrison, the national programmes director of loveLife, which is the country's main barrier against HIV and unwanted pregnancy among the youth: "Achieving sexual behaviour change is a complex task" (News24 2000:¶13).

Adults in both secular and religious circles are debating the issue of how to properly educate adolescents about the issues of sexuality. South African schools follow a Comprehensive Sexual Education program which is aimed at reducing the risk of HIV, other STDs and pregnancies among adolescents. It is my opinion that the church should actively arise and set a target, not simply to reduce HIV prevalence and teenage pregnancy, but to reduce promiscuous sexual activity among the youth of our country.

A combination of biological and social factors exerts enormous pressure on adolescents to start having sex early (CMF 1998:¶4). Adolescents are subject to fluctuating hormones and a growing sexual awareness and desire due to the early

onset of puberty (Maguire 2008:¶4). The media generally insists that casual sex is normal and desirable, undermining the traditional conviction that sex should be reserved for marriage (Durfield and Durfield 2004:23). The easy availability and widespread promotion of contraception among teenagers also contributes to early teen sex in South Africa.

Peer pressure is probably regarded as the biggest factor that influences adolescents' decisions regarding sexuality in South Africa (Caelers 2005:¶10). Most adolescents are very insecure about their appearance and very concerned about being accepted by their peers. Lack of communication by parents is another big factor that influences teen sexuality in South Africa (Caelers 2005:¶10). Studies have confirmed that although adolescents typically resist authority and test boundaries, it is parents', and especially the fathers', overall relationship with their children that ingrains sexual values into their lives (Gresh 2001:¶26). Pessimism regarding their future is another factor that influences teen sexuality in South Africa (Mayo 2008:19). Teenagers, however, are not pessimistic when it comes to the consequences of teen sex. Most young people don't believe anything bad can happen to them (Gresh 2001:19). Self-centeredness and a sense of "I'll be OK" characterise adolescent thinking (CMF 1998:¶21).

When trying to understand and guide adolescent sexual behavior and decision-making, it is important to consider their neurological development, since the areas of the brain that process complex abstract information that influences decision making and behavior is not fully developed until well into the third decade of life (Weinberger et al 2005:19). MRI studies have shown that teenagers rely more on the area of the brain that experiences emotions when making decisions, while adults rely more on the area linked to reason and judgment (Weinberger et al 2005:12). Furthermore, adolescents have limited cognitive ability to assess risk, make long-range plans, and control impulses; therefore they tend to make decisions on the basis of immediate reward (Weinberger et al 2005:22). The research does not suggest that young people are incompetent or that they lack capacity for making good decisions (Weinberger et al 2005:7). However, these findings suggest that adolescents may make more mature decisions in environments where there are limited options and it

suggests that guidance from parents and other adult institutions are essential while the decision-making circuitry in the brain is being formed (Weinberger et al 2005:12). I believe that the church needs to play an active role in guiding teenagers in their decision-making regarding sexuality in this critical life stage.

Statistically, Christian-based resources and appropriate information about sexuality increase the chance of responsible sexual behaviour among teenagers (Mayo 2008:20).

However, neither spiritual orientation nor religious context provides ironclad protection from misuse of sexuality by others or oneself (Mayo 2008:20). When the church teaches and models a clear message of sexual purity, young people are more likely to embrace Biblical and Christian values regarding sexuality, because they see the fruit thereof in others' lives. When young people clearly know what they believe and why, they are much better equipped to take responsibility for the decisions they make. Furthermore, when adolescents are supported by a reference group that reinforces morality, they are regularly motivated to make responsible decisions (Mayo 2008:24). The church not only has a responsibility, but it offers a uniquely favourable environment to influence, guide and equip adolescents in making decisions regarding their sexuality that will result in freedom and hope on a physical, emotional and spiritual level.

5.2 Summary of Preferred Scenario

The Biblical understanding of humanity as being created in God's image forms an important basis for a Christian understanding of sexuality (UCP 1997:9). In God's design, our sexuality is a reflection of the fact that we are created in His image, and it is intended to be enjoyed and expressed fully within the context of a marriage relationship with someone of the opposite sex (Pipps 2004:1). When addressing young people about the topic of sexuality, it is important to emphasize that sexual desire and attraction are not sinful, but healthy (Durfield and Durfield 2004:145). However, when we want to satisfy our desires in ways outside of God's will, we may fall into sin. Therefore, we need to find our sexual identity in the image of God and

we need to honour the marriage covenant in our expression of our sexuality (Heb.13:4). Through experiencing God's love through salvation and a living relationship with Jesus Christ, and through obedience to His Word, we discover God's intention for humanity created in His image. The church possesses these truths and I believe that we have a responsibility to guide adolescents in the process of finding their sexual identity in God through an understanding of and obedience to His Word.

I believe that it is of utmost importance to teach adolescents to celebrate their singleness. A major task of adolescence is to become "your own person" (Coach 2007:¶2). I believe that singleness, in the sense of being unattached to someone in a romantic relationship, is essential for adolescents to become unique and whole individuals in their own right. Adolescents should be encouraged to celebrate their unmarried years as a gift from God, because it is a season unprecedented in opportunities to pursue and serve God wholeheartedly without distraction (1Cor.7:32-35). Instead of being ashamed about their singleness, adolescents should be encouraged to embrace their individuality and pursue their wholeness in God. It is in pursuit of God that we find true fulfilment, and we come to a place where we don't feel we "need" to enter into a relationship due to fear of rejection, peer pressure or loneliness. It is in celebrating singleness where we find wholeness, which is the quickest and best way to prepare us for marriage.

I believe that it is important for the church to teach adolescents the difference between purposeful romantic relationships and casual short term relationships. According to God's design, the joy of intimacy is the reward of commitment (Harris 2003:28). God has made the fulfilment of romantic intimacy the by-product of commitment-based love within the context of marriage (Harris 2003:28). Most adolescents go on dates and enter into romantic relationships because they want to enjoy the emotional and physical benefits of romantic intimacy without the responsibility of real commitment (Harris 2003:28). I believe that the ideal romantic relationship is started only after both individuals have expressed their intention of marital commitment to one another. Young people should be encouraged and guided

to wait until they are ready to pursue purposeful romantic relationships in which they can match romance with commitment.

I believe that it is important for the church to teach adolescents the difference between true love and infatuation. “Falling in love” is a typically sudden emotional experience called infatuation, which is the body’s chemical response to attraction, and is especially common in the teenage years (Ingrim 2008:§3). One of the neurobiological effects of infatuation is a decreased ability to make decisions based on sound judgment (Love 2001:1). Infatuation never lasts, and is thus not a good foundation for building a lasting romantic relationship. On the other hand, a biblical perspective on love will help adolescents to approach relationships differently than our culture does. As Christians, every relationship is an opportunity to love another person as Christ has loved us (Eph.5:1-2). Adolescents need to know that they don’t have to enter into a relationship with someone just because they are infatuated or because someone else is infatuated with them. It is best to submit and surrender their feelings and desires to God in prayer and worship, and ask for His will to be done. The feelings will probably not go away immediately, but when we choose to surrender to God, we receive grace to do His will.

I believe that it is important to challenge adolescents to embrace God’s standard of holiness as a personal conviction. Rather than telling us where to stop sexual activity before it “goes too far”, the Bible charges us to not even start sexual activity outside of the bounds of marriage (SoS 2:7, 3:5, 8:4). If we engage in any type of sexual activity outside of marriage, we’re sinning in that we’re dishonouring our bodies, dishonouring our future marriage partners, damaging our emotions, and corrupting our thoughts (Durfield and Durfield 2004:149). God’s standard of holiness is a pure heart and mind (Matt.5:27). It is only by keeping our standard of holiness high and killing sin in its infantile stage that we will avoid its destruction (Harris 2003:97). Adolescents should be encouraged to set a biblical standard of holiness where they avoid situations that could compromise the purity of their bodies or minds (Heb.13:4, 1Thess.4:3-8, Col.3:5).

I believe that the biggest challenge for adolescents is to fully submit their love lives to God. When adolescents accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ over their lives, it empowers them to live above their emotions and desires and experience true fulfillment in relationship with God. Submission to God's authority influences the practical everyday decisions of where, when, how, why and with whom they choose to be (Harris 2003:91). When we have accepted the Lordship of Jesus Christ, it means that we truly desire to please God more than we desire to please ourselves. Adolescents can be encouraged that in sacrificing their own desires in obedience to God, God will provide something that far exceeds their greatest desires. I believe that the church has a responsibility to guide young people to a place where they can discern God's will for themselves and make mature decisions that will result in true freedom and fulfillment.

5.3 Summary of Practical Solutions

In order for the church to minister to adolescents effectively, we need to consider the characteristics of what effective Sex Education programs have in common. I suggest that these characteristics are implemented in the following ways: a clear message of abstinence before marriage should be delivered consistently and repeatedly to adolescents by people who believe in the message. Furthermore, it is important to involve adolescents and to keep the message appropriate to their age and sexual experience.

When speaking to young people about purposeful romantic relationships (leading to marriage), it is wise to guide them to arrive at the desired conclusion themselves. While most of them agree that it is sinful and hurtful for a married person to have a sexual relationship with someone that they're not married to, many need guidance to agree that it is just as sinful and hurtful for an unmarried person to have a sexual relationship with someone that are not married to anyone in particular yet (Heb.13:4). This principle can then be applied to determine appropriate intimacy in friendships and romantic relationships for adolescents. My encouragement to young people is to view and treat every single person of the opposite sex as someone else's future

husband or wife. I believe that adolescents within romantic relationships need guidance and accountability from mature Christian people who can help them to protect each other's purity.

When teaching adolescents about the difference between love and infatuation, it is not enough to simply impart knowledge. It is important to help them discern for themselves how to evaluate their own feelings before entering into a romantic relationship as well as within romantic relationships. A table with questions and suggested answers are included to guide adolescents in the process of differentiating between love and infatuation.

Similarly, the church can guide adolescents to make mature decisions regarding romantic relationships by taking into consideration a variety of important factors. A decision making model with questions, suggested answers and responses are set up to guide adolescents in the process of decision making before entering into romantic relationships as well as within romantic relationships.

The church can empower adolescents to make responsible decisions by teaching them to adopt a proactive decision making style where they take responsibility for the consequences of their actions and decisions (Bolen 2008:¶8). In order to achieve this, adolescents need more than just information; they need discipleship, guidance and accountability from mature Christian leaders, family and friends. The church needs to model and teach adolescents the importance of inviting perspective and accountability.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

I believe that the church possesses the truth that has the potential to revolutionize a generation of young people, and I dream of this potential being released in South Africa. Adolescents who have received and continue to receive the love of their heavenly Father, the forgiveness and identity of a new life in Christ, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, will be better equipped to choose sexual purity than the general population. When the concept of abstinence is taught within the context

of a larger Christian and Biblical worldview, it will help teenagers to see the sacredness and beauty of sex and marriage as intended by God. When adolescents are disciplined and guided by mature single and married people in the church who model fulfilled and happy relationships with God and others, it will be easier for them to see themselves as worthy image bearers of God and see their bodies as valuable temples of the Holy Spirit. Teenagers not only need, but desperately desire to hear the eternal truth centered in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am convinced that this truth will not only restore a hopeless generation, but empower them to live lives of significant holiness in a sexually confused society.

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Addendum A

Test: Is it Love or Infatuation?

The following table contains questions and answers that can be used to help adolescents differentiate between love and infatuation. These questions are set up based on a test adapted from Ingrim (2008:3,4) in *Love, Sex and Lasting Relationship*. These questions can be applied to adolescents who are contemplating entering into a romantic relationship, or to those who are already in a romantic relationship.

Test:	Question:	Do I really love?	Or am I only infatuated?
Time	How long did it take to “fall in love”?	My love for this person has grown over a relatively long period of time.	I fell in love quickly.
Knowledge	How well do I know this person?	I know this person relatively well, and I love everything I know about this person.	I’m acquainted with only one or a few characteristics of this person.
Focus	What does feeling “in love” make me think about?	I’m thinking how I can love and serve the other person.	When I think about this person it makes me feel wonderful.
Singularity	Can I be “in love” with more than one person?	There’s only one person I want to love.	I am / it would be possible for me to fall in love with

			more than one person at the same time.
Security	Do I trust this person?	I trust this person.	I am often jealous and do not really trust this person.
Work	How do I feel about work (e.g. homework or studying)?	I'm willing to work and make sacrifices for the sake of the other person.	I have no ambition or appetite for work.
Problem solving	How do you / will you solve problems that arise in your relationship?	I/we approach problems intelligently in order to resolve them.	I'm irritated and impatient with problems / I don't really see any problems, and if they arise, we will sort it out.
Distance	How do I feel when I am far apart from this person?	My love is constant and grows stronger even when we are far apart from each other.	My feelings fluctuate and are weakened when we're apart from each other.
Physical attraction	What is most attractive to me about this person?	I am attracted by this person's character.	I am attracted by this person's looks.
Physical involvement	How important is physical	We can have a relationship without	Our relationship is dependent upon

	involvement to me?	any physical involvement.	physical involvement.
Affection	When is the appropriate time to express affection to someone of the opposite sex?	It is best to grow in your friendship first before expressing affection.	Affection should be expressed if you want to start a relationship.
Stability	How does this person or relationship influence my emotions?	My love for this person has grown through the emotional changes and still lasts.	My emotions are changing and sometimes I don't feel "in love".
Delayed gratification	How do you feel about waiting (to enter into a relationship / to be physically involved)?	I don't mind waiting till the right time to enter into the relationship / to be physically involved.	I don't want to wait.

Addendum B

Decision Making Model

The following decision making model is set up to help adolescents make mature decisions by asking a series of questions with regards to romantic relationships. These questions are meant to be asked in combination, not isolation, so that adolescents can make their own decisions based on a variety of important factors surrounding romantic relationships.

The answers to these questions can be compared to the colours of a traffic light (adapted from Basso 2003:1), which indicate whether it is safe to proceed, better to wait until the light turns green, or best to stop. The first series of questions (adapted from Harris 2000,2003) is meant to aid adolescents in the decision making process before entering into a romantic relationship, but will also be helpful to those who are already in a romantic relationship. The second series of questions is meant to aid adolescents who are already involved in a romantic relationship.

	Decision-making traffic sign		
Questions to ask before entering into a romantic relationship	Green light – GO	Yellow light – WAIT	Red light – STOP
Am I at a marriageable age?	Yes, I'm ready to get married in the near future	Maybe / I'm not sure / I think so / I'm anxious to get married	No, I'm not ready to get married soon
Am I ready for a	Yes, I feel peaceful	Maybe / I'm not	No, I don't want to

purposeful romantic relationship (leading to marriage)?	about getting married in the near future	sure / I think so / If I don't pursue this relationship now, I will miss out forever (anxiety and impatience)	get married in a reasonable period of time
Do I have a proven character, and am I growing in godliness?	Yes	Maybe / I'm not sure / I think so	No
Guys: Am I prepared to lead my wife spiritually and serve her in every way?	Yes	Maybe / I'm not sure / I think so	No
Girls: Am I prepared to submit to my husband and serve him in every way?	Yes	Maybe / I'm not sure / I think so	No
Is this person a Christian who serves God wholeheartedly?	Yes, I look up to this person's relationship with God, he/she inspires me to live closer to God	Maybe / I'm not sure / I think so / I can help this person to get closer to God	No, this person does not serve God with the same devotion that I do / this person does not serve God at all
Is this someone I would like to be married to?	Yes, this is the kind of person that has the	Maybe / I'm not sure / I think so / I don't know	No, this will simply be a nice boyfriend/girlfriend

	characteristics that still matters at 50		
What are my motives for entering into a relationship?	I want to honour God and love the other person with the pure love of God	I'm not sure / I don't think my motives are wrong	If I'm honest, my motives are selfish / worldly (for my own pleasure)
Am I willing to do God's will, whatever it is?	Yes, I've made up my mind to obey His will, even if it's not what I want.	I'm not sure if I can know God's will / whether He has a will regarding this relationship.	If it's not God's will for me, He will take the feelings away.
What does God say to me (subjectively)? What do I feel God is saying about the person and timing?	Yes, I have a keen sense that God is leading me to marry this person, and that now is a good time to pursue this relationship.	Maybe / I'm not sure / I think so / I want God to tell me that this is supposed to be my husband or wife	No, I have no clear direction from God that this is the person I should be married to , I have no clear direction from God about the timing
What does God say (objectively)? What does God say through other mature Christians about the person and timing?	Yes, I have received confirmation from objective mature Christians that I trust and respect that God is leading me to pursue this relationship now.	I'm not interested in what others have to say / I get mixed messages from others.	Other mature Christians warn me about the person and/or the timing of the relationship.

What do my parents have to say about the person and timing?	My parents are positive and supportive about the person and timing ¹	My parents support everything I do / I know my parents will be supportive if they get to know the person better.	My parents have serious concerns about the person and/or timing of the relationship.
How does this person relate to others (authorities, parents, the opposite sex, friends)?	This person respects and submits to authorities and parents, and treats members of the opposite sex with purity and respect. I respect his/her friends.	I'm not sure / I have not observed the person relate to others enough yet.	This person is disrespectful towards leaders / dishonouring towards parents / flirtatious towards members of the opposite sex / I don't like his/her friends.
Questions to ask within a romantic relationship?	Green light – GO	Yellow light – CAUTION: make adjustments within the relationship / consider ending the relationship	Red light – STOP
Have I prayed	Yes, I believe this	I'm not sure what	When I pray, I don't

¹ This is ideal, but not always possible. Some parents are absent or choose not to be involved in their children's romantic lives. Others are supportive without really considering the character of the other person or the timing of the relationship.

about whether this relationship is God's will for me now?	relationship is in God's will for me now.	God says.	have peace about this relationship.
Is this relationship pleasing to God?	Yes, I believe that God is pleased with the way we treat each other.	I'm not sure.	No, I don't feel that God would be pleased with our relationship.
Do I have a sense of marrying this person?	Yes.	Maybe.	No, I don't want to marry this person.
How do I feel when I spend time and after I spent time with this person?	Respected, comfortable, safe, happy, confident, trusting	Guilty, uncertain, stressed, confused, upset, uncomfortable	Afraid, threatened, ashamed, fearful, controlled, abused
Is our friendship growing?	Our friendship is growing and deepening, and I enjoy this person's friendship.	We used to be good friends, but now our friendship is not growing anymore.	We are lovers, but we are not really friends.
How does this relationship affect other important relationships?	My relationships with others (friends and family) are still growing.	Other relationships (friends and family) are not that important to us anymore.	This relationship crowds out other relationships with friends and family.
Do we have boundaries for physical	Yes, we both agree to the boundaries and	We don't agree on boundaries / we struggle to keep to	No, boundaries do not work for our relationship.

involvement?	keep to them.	our boundaries.	
What is our physical involvement?	We have no or very few physical involvement.	I feel that we are too involved physically / I feel guilty and uncomfortable.	I feel that we are too involved physically / I feel guilty and ashamed.
How do we both feel about premarital sex?	We both have a conviction that sex should be reserved for marriage.	We both know that sex should be reserved for marriage, but we struggle with our physical involvement.	We do not agree that sex should be reserved for marriage.
To whom and for what are we accountable?	We are accountable to our spiritual leaders for everything in our relationship.	We are only accountable to our friends / we are only accountable for some things in our relationship.	We don't want to be accountable to anyone for anything in our relationship.
Do we treat each other as if we will be somebody else's future husband and wife?	Yes, we treat each other with purity and respect.	Sometimes, but not always.	No.
Is our relationship a testimony of godliness to others?	Yes.	Sometimes, but not always.	No.

How would I feel if this relationship would break up?	Heartbroken, but I will not regret the way we treated each other.	Heartbroken and I will probably regret many things about this relationship.	Heartbroken and depressed, but at least I get something out of it while it lasts.
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Addendum C

For Single Men and Women (And the Rest of Us), by John Piper (adapted from the forward of *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood – A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, by Wayne Grudem and John Piper, 2006 available at:

<http://www.cbmw.org/Online-Books/Recovering-Biblical-Manhood-and-Womanhood/For-Single-Men-and-Women-and-the-Rest-of-Us>

For Single Men and Women (And the Rest of Us)

Margaret Clarkson wrote:

Because married people were all single once, they tend to think that they know all there is to know about singleness. I suggest that this is not so; that there is a vast difference between being single at 25 or 30, with marriage still a viable possibility, and being single at 45 or 50 or 60, with little or no prospect of ever being anything else. Singleness has a cumulative effect on the human spirit which is entirely different at 50 than at 30.^{1}

What I would like to do is try to let single people do as much of the talking as possible---people like Jesus and the Apostle Paul and some contemporary men and women who serve in the single life. We hear at least eight important theses on singleness when we tune in to Jesus and His contemporary single followers.^{2}

I. Marriage, as we know it in this age, is not the final destiny of any human.

My mother was killed in a bus collision near Bethlehem in Israel in 1974. She was fifty-six years old and had been married to my father for thirty-seven years. As the grief began to heal, God gave my father another wonderful wife. I rejoice in this. But it has caused me to take much more seriously the words of Jesus to the Sadducees concerning marriage in the resurrection. They told Jesus about a woman who was widowed seven times. "At the resurrection," they asked, "whose wife will she be?"

Jesus answered, "When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25).

This is important to me because it means my father will not be a bigamist in the age to come. Why? Because in the resurrection, marriage as we know it will not exist.

This has profound significance for singleness in this life. It means that if two wives will not be one too many, then no wives will not be one too few. If love in the age to come is transposed into a key above and beyond the melody of marriage in this life, then singleness here will prove to be no disadvantage in eternity.

In fact, there is some warrant for thinking that the kinds of self-denial involved in singleness could make one a candidate for greater capacities for love in the age to come. No one has left anything for the sake of the kingdom, says the Lord Jesus, who will not receive back far more (Matthew 19:27-30). Many unmarried people have strengthened their hands with this truth. For example, Trevor Douglas, a single missionary with Regions Beyond Missionary Union, working in the Philippines among the Ifugao people, wrote in 1988:

In the end, however, Christians know that Jesus will more than make up for every cost incurred by being a single male missionary. As I have applied his promises in Matthew 19:27-30 to myself, I see a tremendous exchange taking place in eternity. The social cost of not fitting in a couple's world will be exchanged for socializing with Jesus around his throne. I'll trade the emotional cost of loneliness and the family hurt for companionship with new fathers, mothers, and families. I'll exchange the physical cost for spiritual children. And when I'm snubbed, I love to think of eternity and the privilege of going from the last of the gospel preachers to the head of the line. The rewards are worth everything.^{3}

II. Jesus Christ, the most fully human person who ever lived, was not married.

In 1987, I wrote an editorial for the Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* during a volatile controversy over advertising condoms on television.^{4} The concern of the networks was to help curb the spread of AIDS. My basic point was: "In the act of endorsing protection from disease, the ads also endorse its cause, namely, sexual promiscuity." I said that the claim that condoms make for "safe" sex betrayed an incredible naiveté about human nature.

My argument went like this: "Personhood is deeper and more significant than what is physical. Only a superficial view of personhood says we will be 'safe' if we can avoid a disease while pursuing acts that Western civilization has overwhelmingly called immoral and that the Bible indicts as dishonoring to our creator. . . . Not only the Biblical teaching but also the testimony of human conscience in varied cultures around the world have said for centuries that extramarital sex and homosexual activity are destructive to personhood, to relationships and to the honor of God, who made our sexuality to deepen and gladden the union of man and woman in marriage."

You can imagine that this did not go unchallenged. I got a letter from one young man who spoke for a certain group of single people when he said, "My girlfriend and I have lots of good sex together. We think your ideas are repressive leftovers from the Victorian era that make people neurotic and miserable. We think our sexuality is part of our personhood, and not to enjoy it is to be incomplete people. We have no intention of getting married to meet the expectations of any puritans. And we think a life of slavery to virginity would mean being only half human."^{5}

When I wrote back to this man, the centerpiece of my response was this: The most fully human person who has ever lived, or ever will live, is Jesus Christ, and He never once had sexual intercourse.

This can be powerfully liberating to single people who may think at times, "This one thing I will never have, sexual relations, and in not having it I will not be all I was meant to be." To this thought Jesus, the virgin, says, "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). We will always have mountains of truly human Christ-likeness yet to climb, but sexual intercourse is not one of them. For He never knew it. And He is infinitely whole.

The paradox we may feel in this is captured in the title of Luci Swindoll's book on singleness: *Wide My World, Narrow My Bed*. Single by choice at forty-nine (when she wrote the book), she shows that the narrow path of the Son of Man, who had no place to lay his head (not even on a woman's shoulder), leads into a wide world of wonder and freedom and joy and love.^{6}

Cheryl Forbes illustrates how she and other single women and men have been inspired by the "wideness" of Jesus' single life:

Jesus is the example to follow. He was single. He was born to serve. . . . He had deep friendships among all sorts of people---men, women, single, married. That was his work, an intimate part of his ultimate mission of dying on the cross for our sins. . . . His relationships with Mary, Martha, Peter, and the other disciples helped prepare him for his death. No one can love in the abstract. He allowed himself to be interrupted by needy children, distraught fathers, hungry men and sick women. . . . Jesus sought to make himself vulnerable.{7}

III. The Bible celebrates celibacy because it gives extraordinary opportunity for single-minded investment in ministry for Christ.

Paul said that he wished everyone could know the freedom for ministry that he enjoyed as a single person (1 Corinthians 7:7). He went on to explain,

I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs---how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world---how he can please his wife---and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world---how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. (1 Corinthians 7:32-35).

Many single people give thanks for this truth in their own lives. It seems to come out most often in a cherished freedom for flexible scheduling and for risk-taking. As a single missionary in Kenya, Rhena Taylor wrote:

Being single has meant that I am free to take risks that I might not take were I a mother of a family dependent on me. Being single has given me freedom to move around the world without having to pack up a household first. And this freedom has brought to me moments that I would not trade for anything else this side of eternity.{8}

Trevor Douglas similarly describes the freedom for risk that he has experienced:

The first advantage [of being single] is that it's best adapted to perilous situations. . . . In rugged life among primitive tribes, in guerrilla-infested areas, or in disease and famine, the single man has only himself to worry about. . . . Paul claims that being single and male best fits the shortness of the time. Doing God's work is a momentary thing. Advantages and opportunities come and go very quickly. The single

lifestyle enables one to get the most out of the time God gives for his work. . . . One of my chief delights is that I don't have to fit my ministry around a family schedule. I don't have to be home at a certain time each night. My time is the Filipinos' time.{9}

Douglas quotes one of his heroes, another single missionary with radical single-mindedness, David Brainerd:

I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls for Christ. While I was asleep I dreamed of these things, and when I awoke the first thing I thought of was this great work. All my desire was for the conversion of the heathen, and all my hope was in God.{10}

A single friend at our church read this third point and responded like this to balance the scales:

I believe that singles have flexibility in scheduling but are not totally free from anxiety. While I'm happy to be free from balancing husband and family needs and ministry, I must face other "practical" needs should Jesus tarry---retirement, housing, finances, etc. The reality is that single women have to plan for the future as singles. We must be good stewards with the resources we have, but studies show that women don't earn the same salaries that men do for the same tasks. And in ministry everyone earns less than in the secular world, but it's a choice that has been made, but that doesn't mean I don't feel the tension.

How do singles balance a career that requires more than forty hours a week plus other outside commitments (continuing education, etc.) with the "extraordinary opportunity for single-minded investment in ministry"? I think there will be those singles who interpret this to mean that because they are not married they are "expected" to devote every non-working hour to ministry---something not expected from those who are married. I don't think that is what you are saying. Unfortunately there are many in the church who reinforce this error in thinking. This thinking can turn into an abusive situation. Singles can be guilted and shamed into doing too much. I believe there must be a caution to singles not to become "over-invested." Singles must protect their spiritual, physical, and emotional health as well as those who are married. Singles need to be affirmed to take time to develop nurturing relationships ("family").

IV. The Apostle Paul and a lot of great missionaries after him have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of God.

"Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas?" (1 Corinthians 9:5). With these words Paul shows that it was normal and permissible for him as an apostle to have a wife. But he chose not to use this legitimate right (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:15). He was the first of a long line of single men and women who have renounced marriage for the sake of the gospel, as Jesus said some would: "For some . . . have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:12).

This renunciation has, in most cases, required immense courage and devotion to Christ. Ada Lum, a single woman working with International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Southeast Asia, told this moving story of devotion:

Flying from Rome to Munich I had warm fellowship with an attractive and spirited nun. I learned this was her first visit home to Germany after thirty years as a missionary. No wonder she was excited! I could also tell that she loved Christ and had served him happily even through the war in the Philippines, where she had been imprisoned in an enemy camp. We talked about our faith in Jesus Christ and our walk with him. Then she showed me her plain gold ring on the inside of which was inscribed, "Wed to Christ." But there certainly was nothing neurotic about her. She was refreshingly human!{11}

Mary Slessor was doing work in the interior of Calabar, West Africa, at the end of the nineteenth century and was deeply desirous of a companion. Her hope centered on Charles Morrison, a man who was working with the mission on the coast. They were engaged, but the mission would not allow him to transfer to the interior because of his poor health. She would have to move to Duke Town. She wrote:

It is out of the question. I would never take the idea into consideration. I could not leave my work for such a reason. To leave a field like Okoyong without a worker and go to one of ten or a dozen where the people have an open Bible and plenty of privilege! It is absurd. If God does not send him up here then he must do his work and I must do mine where we have been placed. If he does not come I must ask the Committee to give me someone else for it is impossible for me to work the station alone.{12}

With similar single-minded devotion to her calling, Lottie Moon broke an engagement with a brilliant young scholar because he "adopted the Darwinian theory of evolution." Years later she said, "God had first claim on my life, and since the two conflicted, there could be no question about the result."{13}

Elisabeth Elliot tells of a conversation she had with Gladys Aylward, missionary to China:

She had been a missionary in China for six or seven years before she ever thought of wanting a husband. When a British couple came to work near her, she began to watch the wonderful thing they had in marriage, and to desire it for herself. Being a woman of prayer she prayed---a straightforward request that God would call a man from England, send him straight out to China, and have him propose. She leaned toward me on the sofa on which we were sitting, her black eyes snapping, her bony little forefinger jabbing at my face. Elisabeth, she said, "I *believe* God answers prayer! He *called* him." Then, in a whisper of keen intensity, "but he *never* came."{14}

One of the reasons the choice to be single can be courageous is that for some it is the choice of very painful loneliness. Trevor Douglas illustrates this with a story from one of his friends:

Perhaps loneliness takes the heaviest toll. At creation, God knew that man needed companionship. The single male missionary forfeits that legitimate need and embraces loneliness. I well remember how a fellow single missionary brother poured out his heart to me. Christmas is especially bad, he said. That's the hardest. Once I was invited to spend Christmas with a family, but after I got there I wished I had never gone. I felt like they were just trying to do me a favor. I felt like an intruder. Next Christmas, I drove off in my car far away, rented a motel room, and sat there and cried.{15}

The courage to be single (and I realize that marriage requires its kind of courage too) is not just found among missionaries. Many young men and women in more ordinary circumstances have made incredibly hard decisions to avoid a marriage they at first thought was right. Elva McAllaster writes a whole chapter on such stories under the title *The Courage to Stay Single*. For example:

Mara had the courage. She was already wearing a diamond when she began to realize that Larry's moods were so unpredictable that, in spite of all the qualities for which she adored him, he was not good husband

material. Nor was he ready to be a father. She thought of his moods-those black moods-and she shuddered, and stood by her courage.{16}

Mervin had courage, too. He was already engaged, as a matter of fact, when he began to feel ominous intensities of penned-in and nailed-down limitation. He knew it would make him feel like sixteen varieties of a heel to break the engagement, but he knew increasingly that Erma was wrong for him. Wrong, wrong, wrong. When Erma nervously wanted the wedding to be sooner than they had first planned, her insecurity liberated Mervin's emotions, and his emotions liberated his whole future-as he would now describe it.{17}

The point is this: singleness has been a noble and courageous path for ministry ever since Jesus and the Apostle Paul chose it "because of the kingdom of heaven." It is no sign of weakness to want to be married. It is normal, and it is good. The courage comes when you sense God calling you to singleness (for this chapter of your life) and you accept the call with zeal and creative planning for His glory.

V. The Apostle Paul calls singleness a gift from God.

"I wish that all men were [single] as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that" (1 Corinthians 7:7). In essence, Jesus pointed to the same thing in Matthew 19:12 when He said, "The one who can accept this should accept it."

With the gift comes the grace to be chaste. Margaret Clarkson is right: "His commands are his enablings." She reminds the single person, after dealing with her own single sexuality for more than forty years, that chastity is not only commanded but possible, year after year, as a gift from God. She quotes John White's *Eros Defiled* to make the point:

Just as the fasting person finds he no longer wishes for food while the starving person is tortured by mental visions of it, so some are able to experience the peace of sexual abstinence when they need to. Others are tormented. Everything depends upon their mindset or attitude. The slightest degree of ambivalence or double-mindedness spells ruin. I cannot stress this principle enough. Neither hunger for food nor hunger for sex increases automatically until we explode into uncontrollable behavior. Rather, it is as though a spring is wound up, locked in place, ready to be released when the occasion arises. And

should that occasion not arise (and here I refer especially to sex), *I need experience no discomfort.*{18}

Single people do not always discover singleness as a gift at the beginning of their journey. Ada Lum admits that it was a process for her to come to this place:

For a long time I did not consider that my single status was a gift from the Lord. I did not resent it-to be frank, in my earlier idealistic period I thought that because I had chosen singleness I was doing God a favor! But in later years I was severely tested again and again on that choice. Then, through Paul's words and life and my subsequent experiences, it gently dawned on me that God had given me a superb gift!{19}

But single people are not generally treated as the bearers of a superb and special gift from God. They are sometimes treated as abnormal in the church. Perhaps the only text people can think of is Genesis 2:18, "It is *not good* for the man to be alone." Conclusion: singleness is not good. Trevor Douglas candidly describes the cost of being a single man in this kind of atmosphere:

Jesus admitted that singleness is costly, so much so that not everyone can endure it. The obvious cost is the attitude that single men might be gay, or at least slightly strange, and perhaps anti-female. Our North American society is structured definitely for couples. Not so the tribe of Ayangan Ifugaos among whom I work. Although 99 percent of the men are married, they don't look at the one percent as weird. The social cost only hits me when I return home-in the churches, among Christians, who, of all people, should know better.{20}

Well, is it good or not good to be alone? If it is not good---not God's will---how can it be called a "gift from God"? How could Jesus, who never sinned, have chosen it for Himself? How could Paul say it was a great asset for ministry?

Two answers: First, Genesis 2:18 was a statement about man before the fall.

Perhaps, if there had been no fall, there would have been no singleness.{21}

Everyone would have had a perfectly compatible personality type for someone; people and situations would have matched up perfectly; no sin would have made us blind or gullible or hasty; and no great commission---no lostness, no famine, no sickness, no misery---would call for extraordinary measures of sacrifice in marriage and singleness. But that is not our world. So sometimes-many times---it is good for a person to be alone.

But second, almost no one has to be really alone. That's the point of the next thesis. But let me include here another insight from another single person who read this foreword:

I believe that Genesis 2:18 extends beyond the principle of marriage. As a general rule, it is definitely not good for man (or woman) to be alone. God created us to function within relationships. Most of the time, it will not be necessary for the single person to be alone, even though the marriage relationship does not exist. Many married people are very much alone emotionally. Sometimes marriage keeps one from being alone, but not always.

VI. Jesus promises that forsaking family for the sake of the kingdom will be repaid with a new family, the church.

"I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--- and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).

Many singles have discovered these hundreds of family members in the body of Christ. It is often not their fault when they haven't. But many have. Margaret Clarkson's large-hearted book, *So You're Single*, is even dedicated TO MY MARRIED FRIENDS whose love and friendship have so enriched my life. She obviously found a "family" in many of the families in her life.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who was hanged for conspiring to assassinate Hitler, was single. He knew the needs of single people for family, and was moved, in large measure for this reason, to write his little book, *Life Together*. He said simply, the single person "needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him."²² That is what the church is for.

Elisabeth Elliot comes at this need for family from another side, and asks, "How may a single woman enter into the meaning of motherhood if she can have no children?"

She answers:

She *can* have children! She may be a spiritual mother, as was Amy Carmichael, by the very offering of her singleness, transformed for the

good of far more children than a natural mother may produce. All is received and made holy by the One to whom it is offered.{23}

This ideal is not a reality for many singles. But Jesus had a great vision of hundreds of wonderful relationships growing up in the lives of single people who choose the kingdom road of obedient singleness rather than accepting marriage from an unbeliever. We who are leaders in the churches should open our eyes to make the same discovery that Frank Schneider made:

For the first time in years of Christian service, we were aware of an affluence of intelligent, capable, loyal, energetic, talented single adults who only wanted someone to care enough to recognize they exist. Some lonely, some deeply hurt, others very self-sufficient and quite in control, but all desiring fellowship in a Christian atmosphere where they can feel they belong.{24}

VII. God is sovereign over who gets married and who doesn't. And He can be trusted to do what is good for those who hope in Him.

Job speaks not just for those who had and lost, but also for those who never had, when he says, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21). God rules in these affairs, and we will be the happier when we bow before His inscrutable ways and confess, ". . . no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" (Psalm 84:11). "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

Margaret Clarkson's personal statement of submission rings with the strength that comes from bowing before the sovereignty of God:

Through no fault or choice of my own, I am unable to express my sexuality in the beauty and intimacy of Christian marriage, as God intended when he created me a sexual being in his own image. To seek to do this outside of marriage is, by the clear teaching of Scripture, to sin against God and against my own nature. As a committed Christian, then, I have no alternative but to live a life of voluntary celibacy. I must be chaste not only in body, but in mind and spirit as well. Since I am now in my 60's I think that my experience of what this means is valid. I want to go on record as having proved that

for those who are committed to do God's will, his commands are his enablings.

My whole being cries out continually for something I may not have. My whole life must be lived in the context of this never-ceasing tension. My professional life, my social life, my personal life, my Christian life---all are subject to its constant and powerful pull. As a Christian I have no choice but to obey God, cost what it may. I must trust him to make it possible for me to honor him in my singleness. That this *is* possible, a mighty cloud of witnesses will join me to attest. Multitudes of single Christians in every age and circumstance have proved God's sufficiency in this matter. He has promised to meet our needs and he honors his word. If we seek fulfillment in him, we shall find it. It may not be easy, but whoever said that Christian life was easy? The badge of Christ's discipleship was a cross. Why must I live my life alone? I do not know. But Jesus Christ is Lord of my life. I believe in the sovereignty of God, and I accept my singleness from his hand. He could have ordered my life otherwise, but he has not chosen to do so. As his child, I must trust his love and wisdom.{25}

Ann Kiemel Anderson gave poetic expression to what thousands of Christian singles have discovered about the relationship of desire for marriage and devotion to a sovereign God:

*Jesus, if this is Your will,
then YES to being single.
In my deepest heart, i want to marry,
to belong to a great man;
to know that i am linked to his life . . .
and he to mine . . .
following Christ and our dreams together . . .
but You know what i need.
if i never marry, it is YES to You.{26}*

VIII. Mature manhood and womanhood are not dependent on being married.

This is why the rest of this book is relevant for single people, even when it is dealing with marriage. The question every man and woman should ask earnestly is this: "What does it mean to be a woman and not a man?" Or: "What does it mean to be a man and not a woman? What is my masculine or feminine personhood (not just anatomy and physiology)?" We are persuaded from Scripture that masculinity and femininity are rooted in who we are by nature. They are not simply reflexes of a

marriage relationship. Man does not become man by getting married. Woman does not become woman by getting married.

But it is clear that the form that a man's leadership, provision, and protection take varies with the kind of relationship a man has with a woman---from the most intimate relationship of marriage to the most casual relationship with a stranger on the street. And the form that a woman's affirmation of that leadership takes will also vary according to the relationship. Mature femininity does not express itself in the same way toward every man. A mature woman who is not married, for example, does not welcome the same kind of strength and leadership from other men that she would welcome from her husband. But she will affirm the strength and leadership of men in some form in all her relationships with worthy men. I know this will need a lot of explanation. That is what I try to do in Chapter 1.

The point here is simply to stress that for single people sexual personhood counts. It does not first emerge in marriage. No one is ready for marriage who has not discovered in practical ways how to live out his mature masculinity or her mature femininity. Paul Jewett is right:

Sexuality permeates one's individual being to its very depth; it conditions every facet of one's life as a person. As the self is always aware of itself as an "I," so this "I" is always aware of itself as himself or herself. Our self-knowledge is indissolubly bound up not simply with our human being but with our sexual being. At the human level there is no "I and thou" per se, but only the "I" who is male or female confronting the "thou," the "other," who is also male or female.{27}

This is not dependent on marriage. Ada Lum illustrates this for single women:

At any age the single woman needs to respect herself as a sexual being whom God created. She is not less sexual for not being married. Sex has to do with biological drive for union with one of the opposite sex. *Sexuality* has to do with our whole personhood as a woman or a man. It has to do with the ways we express ourselves in relation to others. It has to do with being warm, understanding, receptive sexual beings when we relate to another female or to a child or to a man who is the least prospect for a husband! . . . I try to treat him as I do my two brothers. I enjoy Leon and Dick. I respect them. I like to hear them talk about masculine things in masculine ways. I am pleased when they treat me thoughtfully. . . . With care and discretion a single woman can and should be a real woman to the men around her.{28}

Cheryl Forbes gives another illustration of one kind of feminine expression as a single person:

To be single is not to forego the traditional "womanly" pursuits. Whether you live alone or with a husband and children, a house or apartment is still a home that requires "homemaking." And marital status has nothing to do with the desire for warm, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing surroundings. God gave each of us a desire for beauty; it is part of our desire for him, who is loveliness incarnate. Why should a single woman reject that part of her image as a creature of God? . . . I am a better and more imaginative cook now than I was five years ago. I am free to experiment on myself and my friends. I have the time and the money to entertain people around the dinner table, something I might not want or be able to do if I cooked for a family three times a day every day.^{29}

The point is that, married or single, your manhood or your womanhood matters. You dishonor yourself and your Maker if you disregard this profound dimension of your personhood. Our culture is pressing us on almost every side to discount this reality and think of ourselves and each other merely in terms of a set of impersonal competencies and gender-blind personality traits. It has the appearance of promoting justice. But the failure to take into account the profound and complementary differences of masculine and feminine personhood is like assigning a truck driver the task of writing the choreography for two ballet artists.

Our prayer is that God will give to millions of single Christians in our day a deep understanding and appreciation for their own distinct sexual personhood, that Christ will be magnified more and more in you as you offer His gift of singleness back to Him in radical freedom from the way of the world, and that you will grow deeper and deeper in joyful devotion (on the Calvary road) to the triumphant cause of Jesus Christ.

I close this foreword with a final word of hope from a woman of deep insight and long singleness. Margaret Clarkson looks back over a lifetime of singleness and extends a hand to those just starting:

When Christian was crossing the River at the close of *Pilgrim's Progress*, his heart failed him for fear. He began to sink in the cold, dark waters. But Hopeful, his companion, helped him to stand, calling out loudly, "Be of good cheer, my brother; I feel the bottom, and it is

good." Then Christian recovered his faith, and passed safely through the waters to the Celestial City. If there are singles who find the waters of singleness dark and deep, who feel, "I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head; all his waves go over me," this is my message to you concerning singleness: "Be of good cheer, my brother, my sister; I feel the bottom, and it is good."{30}

Endnotes

{1}Margaret Clarkson, *So You're Single* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1978), p. 10.

{2}If you wonder why I quote more women singles than men in what follows, the answer is that there are probably six times as many ministering single women in the church and missions than single men. I base this on a survey taken in the late eighties of nineteen major mission agencies representing 20,333 missionaries. It showed that 16 percent (3,320) were unmarried. Of those, 15 percent were unmarried men. The unmarried women outnumbered the unmarried men in missions six to one. Howard Erickson, "Single Missionary Survey", *Fundamentalist Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1 (January 1989), p. 27. The women have certainly written more about their experience.

{3}Trevor Douglas, "Wanted! More Single Men," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1 (January 1988), pp. 64-65.

{4}John Piper, "Condom Ads Will Promote Promiscuity, Not Good Health," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, February 21, 1987.

{5}This is an understated paraphrase from memory.

{6}Luci Swindoll, *Wide My World Narrow My Bed* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1982).

{7}Cheryl Forbes, "Let's Not Shackle the Single Life," *Christianity Today*, vol. 23, no. 10 (February 16, 1979), pp. 18-19.

{8}Rhena Taylor, *Single and Whole* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p. 71.

{9}Douglas, "Wanted! More Single Men," pp. 65-66.

{10}*Ibid.*, p. 66.

{11}Ada Lum, *Single and Human* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), p. 34.

{12}Ruth Tucker, *Guardians of the Great Commission: The Story of Women in Modern Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), p. 84.

{13}*Ibid.*, p. 40.

{14}Elisabeth Elliot, "Virginity," *Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter*, March/April 1990 (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications), p. 1.

{15}Douglas, "Wanted! More Single Men," p. 63.

{16}Elva McAllaster, *Free to Be Single* (Chappaqua, NY: Christian Herald Books, 1979), p. 49.

{17}*Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

{18}John White, *Eros Defiled* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 22.

Quoted in Clarkson, "Singleness: His Share for Me," *Christianity Today*, Vol. 23, no. 10, February 16, 1979. p. 15.

{19}Lum, *Single and Human*, p. 22.

{20}Douglas, "Wanted! More Single Men," p. 63.

{21}Margaret Clarkson has no doubts in her own mind after six decades of singleness: "I may not blame my singleness on God. Singleness, like homosexuality, suffering, death, and all else that is less than perfect in this world, was not God's original plan for his creation. It was one of the many results of man's fall." Thus Jesus' singleness would not be sin but a participation in the calamities of the fallen world, like his mortality. "Singleness: His Share for Me," *Christianity Today*, vol. 23, no. 10, February 16, 1979, p. 15.

{22}Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doherskin (New York: Harper and Row, 1945), p. 23.

{23}Elliot, "Virginity," p. 3.

{24}Edward F. and Gwen Weising, *Singleness: An Opportunity for Growth and Fulfillment* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1982), pp. 5-6.

{25}Clarkson, "Singleness: His Share for Me," pp. 14-15.

{26}Ann Kiemel Anderson, *I Gave God Time* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1982), p. 20.

{27}Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 172.

{28}Lum, *Single and Human*, pp. 44-45.

{29}Forbes, "Let's Not Shackle the Single Life," p. 17.

{30}Clarkson, *So You're Single*, p. 11.

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Addendum D

Questionnaire for Teenagers

Name& Surname: _____ Date: _____

Gender: _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____

School: _____ Religion: _____

Contact number: _____ Email address: _____

Questions:

1. What is a man to you?

2. What is a woman to you?

3. What does it mean to you to be a man/woman?

4. Are you comfortable with talking about sex? With whom?

5. Do you talk to your parents about sex? Why/why not?

6. Where did you and do you get information/knowledge about sex/sexuality?

7. Do you want to find out more about sex/sexuality? Feel free to elaborate:

8. Do you have someone to talk to when you want to speak about sex/sexuality?
Who?

9. What is your view of homosexuality (gay/lesbians)? Explain

10. Do you consider yourself homosexual (same sex)/bisexual (both
sexes)/heterosexual (opposite sex)? Explain:

11. Describe an ideal romantic relationship:

12. If you have had romantic relationships, what were/are some of your struggles
in romantic relationships?

What does the following people/thing say is important about...

	...The right time to first have sex?	...Who should have sex?	...What sex means?	...Safer sex?
Your family				
Your friends				
Your school (curriculum)				
Your church/ religion				
The Media				
You				

13. Please number the following events in the preferred chronological order of an ideal relationship:

___ We would fall in love ___ We would kiss ___ We would move in together ___ We would ask our friends what they think about us ___ We would give each other gifts ___ We would go out together alone ___ We would have sex ___ We would get married ___ We would go out together in a group ___ We would meet each other's parents ___ We would tell each other that we loved one another ___ We would get pregnant ___ We would tell others that we were a couple ___ We would spend time alone privately ___ We would do things together as friends ___ We would hold hands ___ We would ask our parents what they think about us ___ We would have a physical relationship

14. If you have had past relationships, how does your past relationships compare to the ideal above?

15. Are you currently in a romantic relationship? Give details (e.g. age of partner, how long have you been together):

16. If you are currently in a relationship, how does your present relationship compare to the ideal above?

17. What are a good reason/ good reasons to have sex with someone at this stage of your life?

18. What are a good reason/ good reasons not to have sex in this stage in your life?

19. Are you sexually active? Explain:

20. Which activities do you consider to be "sex"? (e.g. kissing, fondling, intercourse)

21. Which activities do you not consider to be "sex"? What is okay before it becomes sex?

22. How do you feel about masturbation?

23. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It would not be all that bad if I got pregnant (or got someone pregnant) at this time of my life."

24. How do you feel about sexually transmitted diseases like Aids?

25. How do you feel about abortion?

26. How do you feel about pornography?

27. How do you feel about contraceptives, like condoms?

28. Do you consider yourself a religious or spiritual person? Explain:

29. Do your religious practices influence your sexual behavior?

30. Do you feel that your religious values and sexual behavior are often in conflict? Feel free to elaborate:

31. If you ever had sex, how did you feel after your first sexual experience?

32. If you ever had sex, who knows about it? (e.g. parents, friends)

33. Have you ever engaged in sexual activity without being a completely willing participant?

34. Have you ever experienced sexual abuse or violence?

35. Are your parents still married? Give details:

36. Rate your relationship with your mom 0-10 (0=non existent, 10 =perfect) : ____

37. Rate your relationship with you dad 0-10 (0=non existent, 10 = perfect): _____

38. Do you want to get married? What is you ideal picture of a future husband/wife?

39. How do you feel about your physical appearance? (weight, face, body?)

40. Do you ever feel lonely? (how often?)

41. What are some of the things you struggle with regarding your sexuality?

42. What are the things that influence your decisions about romantic relationships and sexuality?

43. What are the things that you would have wanted someone to teach you about dealing with situations regarding sex/sexuality?

Addendum E

Recommended Recourses for Teenagers

Elliot E 1984. *Passion and Purity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Authentic Publishers.

Harris J 2000. *Boy Meets Girl*. Sister, OR: Multnomah Publishers.

Harris J 2003. *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers.

Harris J 2003. *Not even a hint*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers.

Ingrim C [2008]. *Love, Sex & Lasting Relationships*. South-Africa: Walk Thru the Bible.

Munroe M 2008. *Keys for Living Single*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House.