

Question: Would Jesus endorse sex education as a parental responsibility or allow it to be turned over to schools, churches and the community?

From the beginning of the covenant with his people Israel, God placed primary responsibility upon parents to train their children. Through the prophet Moses, God said: “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9 NIV).

This instruction of the children included matters of sexuality. For example, the creation story of Adam and Eve includes allusions to marriage and the fact that the man and woman were “both naked and they felt no shame” and were to “become one flesh” (Genesis 2:18-25). The biblical proverbs give examples of parental instruction to a son warning him of the seductions of an adulteress (Proverbs 5:15-23). The Song of Solomon in the Old Testament also provides a good model for teaching the beauty of a loving, sexual relationship between a man and woman in marriage.

Furthermore, the importance of parental example and involvement in the development of the sexual morality of their children is confirmed by modern sociological research. The *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (1992) has stated: “Permissive parental values regarding adolescent sexual behavior emerged as a strong risk factor for both males and females. Not surprisingly, adolescents who perceived their parents as accepting of premarital adolescent sexual activity were more likely to be sexually experienced.” On the other hand, the journal *Adolescence* (1992) reported that parents who set moderate and reasonable rules for their teens in dating and interaction with the opposite sex were more successful in preventing teen pregnancy.

Generally we can expect teens who have been taught Christian moral values at home and who participate actively in church will be more likely to practice abstinence than their peers. Therefore, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the moral values and the faith in the parents is the best insurance against promiscuity in the younger generation. No sex-education program, curriculum, school or institution can compare with the power of parental involvement and influence.

On the other hand, public institutions of a pluralistic society do not present instruction that include any one set of moral standards. At best, they can only pass on information with the hope that informed young people will act responsibly toward others. But too often children armed with sexual information in the absence of Christian moral values as guidance become more involved in sexual activity to their own detriment.

Jesus was not anti-sex. Instead his warnings against sexual sins were designed to protect the physical and emotional health of society. Sexual activity within the guidelines provided by God brings wonderful blessings. Therefore, parents should not leave instruction on sexuality to anyone else. They must begin early to instill a faith in God and his moral principles that will lead their children to trust these principles to guide them in all of life, including sexual matters.

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