

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: PREMARITAL EDUCATION ADDRESSING PREMARITAL SEX IN THE DISTRICT OF AMBOHIJAFY, MADAGASCAR

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In the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy, premarital sex is one of the very crucial issues leading to a number of church disciplines whether by censure or by removal among many young people, both male and female between the ages of seventeen to twenty four. Then, forced marriages take place among youth which lead to the absence of marital stability. This study is a reflection of what is happening in several churches within the Central Malagasy Conference and the Indian Ocean Union Conference territories. The main target of the present project is to offer to church leaders, school officers, and church members, including young unmarried people, a concrete strategy to deal with premarital sex.

Beginning with the biblical and theological foundations regarding premarital sex intercourse, the researcher continues with a detailed description of the local setting with an emphasis on the obvious realities motivating premarital sex

intercourse and the indications of premarital sex intercourse among the church members.

Then, the researcher proposes four principal approaches to stand as a godly education strategy to deal with premarital sex. These four principal approaches are seminars, prayer sessions, self-help and supporting group discussions with virginity pledge ceremony. The core theme of the seminars is grounded upon 2 Timothy 2:22 and the motto “No to sex before Marriage.” The duration of the overall education programs was less than three months long. Precisely one Sunday and nine Sabbath days were needed to complete the all education programs divided into awareness sessions and seminars sessions stages. Special interdependent tools were also used as equipment along the programs. These tools are a small guidance booklet, a Facebook page and a virginity pledge card.

In conclusion, the education programs based upon seminars, prayer sessions, self-help and supporting group discussions with virginity pledge could bring success in dealing with premarital sex intercourse. At the end of the development of these four approaches, churches leaders were more concerned and a changing behavior among unmarried young people was observed as they refrained from premarital sex intercourse.

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IN THE DISTRICT OF AMBOHIJAFY, MADAGASCAR

A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

by

Harsha Niaina Davidra

January 2023

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Hallelujah, Praise be to my Lord and God!

Dedicated to my precious wife, Nēcha, and my loving son, Meysa

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Overview of the Situation.....	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Significance of the Study.....	3
Delimitation of the Study	4
Methodology and Procedure.....	4
Definition of Terms	5
2. BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS	6
Biblical Origin of Marriage and Sexuality	6
Biblical Principles against Sex outside Marriage.....	9
Old Testament Principles.....	10
The worth of virginity in the Old Testament	11
The worth of female virginity in the Old Testament	11
The protection of female virginity in the Old Testament.....	13
The protection of male virginity in the Old Testament.....	15
The consequence of abusing virginity in the Old Testament.....	16
Holiness must be combined with virginity	18
New Testament Principles	19
Sexual behaviors according to Jesus and the Gospel.....	20
Sexual behaviors according to Paul and the Epistles.....	23
The worth of virginity in the New Testament.....	26
Spirit of Prophecy Principles	28
Marriage and Christian character	29
Ellen White’s appeal to young people	31
Sexual activity before marriage	31
Islamic Stand of Premarital Sex	31
Islamic view of premarital sex intercourse	31
Consequences of premarital sex.....	32
Summary.....	33

3. DESCRIPTION OF LOCAL SETTING	35
The District of Ambohitafy Locality	35
The Republic of Madagascar	35
Surface Area, Provinces, Regions and Trends.....	35
Population, Demography and Age Group	36
Dialects, Languages and Currency	36
The Capital City and its Regions	37
The District of Ambohitafy	38
Its Conference Characteristic.....	38
Churches and Membership Characteristics	38
Schools' Characteristics.....	39
Realities Motivating Premarital Sex.....	40
<i>Côtier's</i> Behaviors Influences	40
Affordable Internet Access	41
Accessibility to Condom Use	42
Karaoke Bars and Discotheque Frequentation	43
Membership Evidences of Premarital Sex	43
Premarital Pregnancies Indication	43
Evidences at Churches	44
Evidences at Schools	44
Church Discipline Indication.....	46
Summary.....	47
4. STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH PREMARITAL SEX	48
Suggested Strategy	48
Seminars	49
Prayer Sessions	50
Self-Help and Supporting Group Discussions.....	50
Virginity Pledge.....	52
Strategy Description	53
Seminars' Central Theme and Motto.....	53
Seminars' Equipment.....	54
Small guidance booklet.....	54
Facebook page.....	54
Virginity pledge card	55
Programme and Seminars' Sessions.....	55
Awareness sessions	55
Realities' demonstrations.....	56
Seminars sessions' format.....	57
Seminars' stages.....	57
Small groups' discussions.....	58
Prayer sessions	58
Virginity pledge ceremony.....	59
Summary.....	60

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS	62
Summary.....	62
Conclusion.....	66
Recommendations	66
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 68
VITA.....	79

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Situation

From its beliefs based on the Bible, Seventh-day Adventist church believes that sex is God's gift, and it has to be experienced between a husband and his wife. And when sexual intimacy is outside marriage, it is a sin.¹ Gary Stewart and his colleagues put it very clear when saying that the Bible forbids some kinds of intercourses like the premarital, the extramarital, and the homosexual intercourses.² On the other hand, one and all who confess to be a Christian must remember that God hates sin because it is a violation and defilement to his law, which break downs the peace.³ As a matter of fact, one characteristic related to sexual intimacy outside marriage relationship is known by both religious and secular environments as premarital sex intercourse. On the other hand, any Christians, devoted or not to their God must remember that that sex outside marriage is morally wrong and prohibited by God.⁴

Unfortunately, from different researches' conclusions established from different backgrounds and related to the subject of premarital sex and Seventh-day

¹ Ted Wilson, "What Is the Adventist View on Sex before Marriage?" accessed 26 November 2022, <https://www.pastortedwilson.org/what-is-the-adventist-view-on-sex-before-marriage/>.

² Gary Stewart et al., *Basic Questions on Sexuality and Reproductive Technology: When Is It Right to Intervene?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1998), 19.

³ Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 10.

⁴ Steven Tracy, "Chastity and the Goodness of God: The Case for Premarital Sexual Abstinence" *Themelios* 31, no. 2 (January 2006): 71.

Adventists,⁵ sexual intercourse is truthfully experienced among Seventh-day Adventist young people, even though they are not yet married, or they are still singles or already engaged to someone. In fact, as reported from a study in 2014, young people were asked what they thought about premarital sex. The report states clearly that only sixty-three percent said sex was not okay outside of marriage.⁶ In addition, according to the research conducted by Ali and Naidoo, while 70% of their respondents endorsed the church's prohibition on premarital sex, 54% of them had engaged in premarital sex.⁷ All of these above-mentioned reports and researches confirm that a very critical situation exists among young unmarried Seventh-day Adventists as many of them are involved into premarital sex intercourse.

Statement of the Problem

At this moment in time, coming to the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy, premarital sex involvement confirmed by premarital pregnancy is correspondingly one of the very important concerns leading a number of churches to a Church Discipline whether by censure or by removal among many young people, both male and female, predominantly between the ages of seventeen to twenty-four. Under

⁵ During the research time related to the development of this project, it has been observed that many researchers wrote on this subject related to young Adventists practicing premarital sex. Here are some of them. See, Galenakgosi M. Orapeleng, "Pre-marital Sex among Seventh-day Adventist Youth in Botswana and Possibilities for Preventative Action," (Master's Thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 2002), <https://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/672>; Institute of Church Ministry, "A Hot Topic: SDA Youth Attitudes on Premarital Sex," accessed 27 October 2022, <https://icm.adventist.org/blog/2015/04/hot-topic-sda-youth-attitudes-premarital-sex>; Hansel Teo Sze Yong and Amanda Simon, "The Perception of Premarital Sex among Students in a Religious Moral Based University," *Abstract Proceedings International Scholars Conference* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1558-1585, <https://doi.org/10.35974/isc.v7i1.1004>; Heidi Karamat Ali and Anthony Naidoo, "Sex Education Sources and Attitudes about Premarital Sex of Seventh Day Adventist Youth," *Psychological Reports* 84, no. 1 (1999): 312, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2466/pr0.1999.84.1.312>; Andrea Jakobsons, "God Has a Plan for That?" *Adventist Review*, January 2018, 53, accessed 27 October 2022, <https://adventistreview.org/magazine-article/god-has-a-plan-for-that/>.

⁶ Institute of Church Ministry, "A Hot Topic: SDA Youth Attitudes on Premarital Sex."

⁷ Ali and Naidoo, "Sex Education Sources and Attitudes about Premarital Sex of Seventh Day Adventist Youth," 312.

such situation, forced marriages take place among youth which led to the absence of marital stability. In fact, this case of premarital sex among young people in the District of Ambohitafy is none other than a reflection of what is happening in several churches all over the Central Malagasy Conference territory. In contrast, investigations and solutions on this particular issue are very occasional. Therefore, the main questions to consider all along the project are, what to do and how to do it to help the young people in the District of Ambohitafy to avoid premarital sex involvement?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to develop a strategy based on a godly premarital education program, and to offer it to singles and unmarried young people, whether they are already engaged to someone or not, with the purpose of avoiding premarital sex involvement.

Significance of the Study

The study is very important as it addresses an existing concern as well as proposing a tangible solution. For that reason, the principles outlined in this project can help any young people to ever step aside premarital sex involvement. Furthermore, these principles can be adapted to meet similar needs in other churches. Correspondingly, any young people educators such as parents, teachers, pastors, church officers as well as church members at large will benefit from this study. The reason is that, the study stands not only as a relevant equipment related to their responsibilities but it is also a program to be adopted in order to continually avoid premarital sex involvement in the Seventh-day Adventist churches because it has been

well said that our young people should be educated on the risk of premarital sex, but also on abstinence as the most effective ways with regards to sex.⁸

Delimitation of the Study

The study focuses on the subject of premarital sex and the development of a strategy to deal with it. The main area of concentration is the District of Ambohimajy based principally upon a focus group, which is none other than the young people between the ages of twelve to twenty-four years.

Methodology and Procedure

The study develops a strategy dealing with premarital sex involvement in the District of Ambohimajy. The strategy will be based mainly on biblical perspectives related to sexuality, especially on premarital sex intercourse among young people. The way the research proceeds further explains the method of the study.

The first major chapter of this study after the introduction, chapter two examines and develops on the theological foundation of the study, based mainly upon the biblical fundamentals toward premarital sex involvement. Accordingly, the biblical principles against sex outside marriage from the Old and the New Testaments in relation to the biblical origin of marriage and sexuality, the worth of virginity, and the different views based upon biblical texts, the Spirit of Prophecy as well as religious perspectives on premarital sex are developed along this chapter.

Chapter three establishes the description of the local setting based mainly on the District of Ambohimajy and its locality. This chapter discusses the religious and the society influences, demonstrating that the problem of premarital sex involvement

⁸ Institute of Church Ministry, "A Hot Topic: SDA Youth Attitudes on Premarital Sex."

exists without doubt in the district. The membership evidences of premarital sex involvement and pregnancy will be also discussed in this chapter.

In addition, the next major chapter, chapter four develops a strategy to handle the premarital sex issue. The chapter will propose a yearly program divided into a weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings. This chapter ends with a proposition of an attempted theoretical evaluation of this strategic program to handle premarital sex involvement when the program will be implemented.

Last of all within chapter five, a general summary of all the project will be given, which will be complemented with a conclusion as well as a number of appropriate recommendations.

Definition of Terms

The expression “premarital sex” used in this paper refers to an act of involvement into sexual intercourse before marriage. The expression “premarital sex intercourse” can be used interchangeably with the word “fornication” which refers to the same act of engagement into sexual intercourse before marriage. By means of a definition, “premarital sex intercourse” is the intromission of the penis by a never-married male into the vaginal tract of a never-married female.⁹

⁹ John Kenneth Davidson, “Premarital Sexual Intercourse and Axiomatic Theory Construction,” *Sociological Inquiry*, January 2007, 63(1): 84, accessed 26 October 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229930233_Premarital_Sexual_Intercourse_and_Axiomatic_Theory_Construction.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Biblical Origin of Marriage and Sexuality

From the very beginning of the human race according to the Bible, based on the creation account in the book of Genesis; it is very clear that marriage and sexuality generated from God. In Genesis 2:18¹ God said that it was not good that man should be alone. This text implies that the first need of man mentioned in the Bible was a companion.² On the other hand, divine initiative is center stage in this passage as it declares: “And the LORD God said.”³ In fact, based on a commentary, it was not God’s purpose for human being to be alone, because loneliness would be detrimental to his well-being.⁴ And this is the reason why in Genesis 2:21, He made the woman out of Adam’s rib. She is taken out from the man by means of a special action and procedure that were initiated and carried out completely by God.⁵ According to Skinner, no fresh creation from the ground can provide a fit companion for man – it must be from his own body.⁶ That means that both the man and the

¹ Except where noted, Scripture passages in this paper are from *The New King James Version*.

² John G. Butler, *Analytical Bible Expositor: Exodus*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Exodus* (Clinton, IA: LBC Publications, 2008), 24.

³ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary 1A (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 212.

⁴ “An Help Meet for Him” [Gen 2:18], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953-1957), 1:225-226.

⁵ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 216.

⁶ John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (New York: Scribner, 1910), 68.

woman were of the same substance, which in turn underscores the unity of the human family.⁷ This is what Genesis 2:24 states that the man shall leave his parents and join with his wife to become one flesh. Miroslav Kiš asserts that marriage is not an accident but God's answer to the human need for mutual love and intimacy.⁸ Beginning with the first man and woman, God established high morals; and when man does not follow these morals, society rots,⁹ because marriage and family are the divine ideal.¹⁰ A comment obviously clarifies this idea in this way, "The woman was formed for inseparable unity and fellowship of life with the man, and the mode of her creation was to lay the actual foundation for the moral ordinance of marriage."¹¹ That means that marriage is the covenant of God, implying His authorship.¹² Miroslav Kiš goes further by saying that the Bible declares invalid any attempt at equating it with sin or its consequences. God Himself was the matchmaker.¹³

The arguments of Ellen White summarize best the origin of marriage. She puts an emphasis by asserting that God Himself celebrated the first marriage and Adam brought it even after he was chased away from the Edenic paradise.¹⁴

Genesis 2:24 ends by saying that would become one flesh. Fruchtenbaum explains that in this case, they became one flesh through and by the first-ever sexual

⁷ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 216.

⁸ Miroslav M. Kiš, "Ordinance of Marriage," accessed 31 October 2022, <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/ordinance-of-marriage/>.

⁹ Butler, *Analytical Bible Expositor: Exodus*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Exodus*, 25.

¹⁰ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 222.

¹¹ "Made He a Woman" [Gen 2:22], *SDABC*, 1:226.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1:227.

¹³ Kiš, "Ordinance of Marriage."

¹⁴ Ellen White, *The Adventist Home* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952), 25-26.

union.¹⁵ This account concerning the marriage origin concludes with Genesis 2:25, which speaks about the nakedness of the newly married couple. The Bible expresses that they were both naked, yet were not ashamed. This nakedness suggests more than the physical condition, for it stresses the fact that married individuals such as Adam and Eve were completely at ease with each other.¹⁶ They were not ashamed because they were not sinning. Husband and wife are permitted intimacy that others are not permitted.¹⁷ That means that pleasurable sexual desires are part of God's good creation.¹⁸ As a matter of fact, biblically speaking sexual intimacy is consistently described with endorsement after a couple engaged themselves into the covenant of commitment, known as marriage. The Bible is full of such examples, a) Adam and Eve (Gen 2:24), b) the pregnancy of Rebekah in Genesis 25:21, c) sexual relationship of Jacob and Leah after their official marriage in Genesis 29:21-30, d) in Exodus 2:21-22 Moses and Zipporah were married at the time they experienced sexual intercourse; e) according to Proverbs 5:18-19, the Bible calls a man to enjoy the foundation of his young wife, f) Matthew 19:4-6 "and the two shall become one flesh"; g) 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 says that mutual fulfillment of marital duties should be experienced by both husband and wife, h) in Hebrews 13:4, Paul says that and the marriage bed kept pure (NIV). These whole biblical references ratify and encourage sexual intimacy in marriage: it is a God-given blessing.¹⁹ Speaking on physical

¹⁵ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, Ariel's Bible Commentary 1 (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2008), 88.

¹⁶ Allen Ross, *Genesis*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary 1 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 49.

¹⁷ Butler, *Analytical Bible Expositor: Exodus*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Exodus*, 25.

¹⁸ Robert A. J. Gagnon, "Sexuality," *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible (DTIB)*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 739.

¹⁹ Joe Boot, *A Biblical View of Marriage and Sexuality*, accessed 31 October 2022, <https://www.ezra institute.com/resource-library/articles/a-biblical-view-of-marriage-and-sexuality/>.

intimacy according to the bible, Razafiarivony confirms as based on Exodus 21:10 that sexual intercourse is considered as a marital duty which is also found in the New Testament (1 Cor 7:3-5) and that conjugal rights is a moral obligation within marriage and by extension it cannot be experienced by non-married persons.²⁰ (emphasis supplied).

Biblical Principles against Sex outside Marriage

According to Craig Keener as based on the lead of Jesus and the biblical Judaism all expressions of sexuality were restricted to marriage.²¹ On the other hand, the Bible clearly identify what sexual behavior is forbidden.²² Steven Tracy rightly describes that both the Old and New Testament, while affirming sex as a gift from God, unequivocally condemn extra-marital sex.²³

For that reason, the next sections will discourse on the Old Testament and the New Testament principles in connection to sexuality and its practices, particularly based on the subject of premarital sex intercourse. Nevertheless, the following few pages are not a comprehensive biblical reference related to sexuality in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Rather, it tentatively suggests few texts from the Old Testament such as Genesis 39:6-11, Exodus 20:14, Leviticus 21:13-14, and Deuteronomy 22:13-29; and from the New Testament, Matthew 5:27-30, Matthew

²⁰ Davidson Razafiarivony, "A Biblical View of Physical Intimacy within Marriage on the Sabbath," in *The Sabbath and the Bible*, ed. Erik Galenieks (Nairobi, Kenya: Adventist Theological Society, 2017), 130-131.

²¹ Craig S. Keener, "Marriage, Divorce, and Adultery," *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 717.

²² Ellens J. Harold, *Sex in the Bible: A New Consideration* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 35.

²³ Tracy, "Chastity and the Goodness of God," 60.

19:3-12, 1 Corinthians 6:18 and 2 Timothy 2:22 to present biblical principles against premarital sex intercourse.

Old Testament Principles

Within the heart of the Ten Commandments, God indicates His hatred of sex outside the marital boundaries. Exodus 20:14 prohibits adultery. This prohibition covers not only adultery but fornication,²⁴ impurity as well as every kind of act, word, and thought in relation to sexuality.²⁵ Butler explains that this command is far reaching in its application as it can be applied to adultery and fornication; and this is the basis for forbidding all sexual immorality in the laws given by God.²⁶ Without a doubt, many commentators uphold this idea that adultery in this text does include fornication and all illicit sexual relationships.²⁷ Clarke states that fornication is included in this category, in fact it is adultery (Matt 15:19).²⁸

Stuart goes further by emphasizing that this commandment does not explicitly condemn premarital sex, but *by implication* it certainly does condemn it.²⁹ Moreover, this verse is related to what the Hebrew people calls as the great sin, which is a designation of idol worship, the violation of the bond of covenant relationship with

²⁴ Fornication refers to sexual activity involving unmarried people. See, Godfrey W. Ashby, *Go Out and Meet God: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 93. Tigay explains that the term “fornication” refers to intercourse at any time before marriage and is not only limited to the period of engagement. See, Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy, The JPS Torah Commentary 5* (Philadelphia, NY: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 206.

²⁵ “False Worship Is Spiritual Adultery” [Exod 20:14], *SDABC*, 1:606.

²⁶ Butler, *Analytical Bible Expositor: Exodus*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Exodus*, 185-186.

²⁷ Roy E. Gingrich, *The Book of Exodus* (Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 2001), 35.

²⁸ Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1999), “Exod 20:14.”

²⁹ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus, The New American Commentary 2*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 464.

God. Without a doubt, in the time of Israel, adultery was unquestionably a crime against people, but it was above all a crime against God Himself. Any person who is practicing adultery which implies premarital sex is similar to an idol worshiper who turns away from commitment to God. And the penalty for adultery was death by stoning (Deut 22:24) or by burning (Gen 38:24; Lev 20:14, 21:9), depending on the cases.³⁰

The worth of virginity in the Old Testament. It is very clear that marriage and sexuality originated from God. Sexuality is intended for married people; and anyone diverting from this principle is committing the great sin and subject to death penalty. This section is going to discuss the worth of virginity in the Old Testament and later on the worth of virginity from the New Testament. Freedman gives information about the word virginity. He declares,

The Hebrew word *bētûlâ* (בְּתוּלָה) occurs 50 times in the Old Testament and the Greek word *parthenos* appears 15 times in the New Testament. ... The Hebrew word is usually qualified by a phrase such as “who has never known a man” (e.g., Gen 24:16, Num 31:18) when the word is used specifically to mean what the word “virgin” means today.³¹

In order to understand the worth of virginity for both male and female, the following discussion will be established upon Genesis 39:6-20, Leviticus 21:13-14, and Deuteronomy 22:13-30.

The worth of female virginity in the Old Testament. Based on the story of the people of God, the Israelites, virginity prior to marriage is viewed not as an option, but clearly an obligation tied to the will of God. According to Deuteronomy 22:13-21, female virginity was a matter of character to be expected. These verses deal

³⁰ John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary 3 (Dallas: Word Incorporated, 1998), 293-294.

³¹ John J. Schmitt, “Virgin,” *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary (TAYBD)*, ed. David Noel Freedman (NY: Doubleday, 1996), 6:853.

with the accusations of premarital sex involvement. The account reveals a man who accused his wife of not having been a virgin (Deut 22:14). In such situation, two evidences will be taking into consideration. The first evidence, as explained in verses 16 and 17, the parents of bride had to produce physical evidence of her virginity (such as a sheet or a garment stained with blood when they had sexual relation upon marriage). If the virginity was proven, the husband will be punished by being prohibited from divorcing his wife (vs. 19). The proof has to be brought to the town elders at the gate (vs. 15) who represent God as they were those who retain jurisdiction in matters of family law. Commenting on this account related to the evidence of virginity, Tigay affirms that this custom of proving virginity was well practiced in the Middle East (parents kept the piece of cloth as evidence).³²

In contrast, Rushdoony explains the value of the punishment that the man had to give to the father of the girl if it happens that he made an untruthful accusation.³³ The fines and/or punishments are spelled out in the Bible (Deut 22:18,19).

Then, if it happens that the charge proves true, the wife is stoned to death for having sexual intercourse before marriage, while still in her father's house (verse 21; NIV). It is very clear that she has to pay the penalty of her sin openly, in front of the house which she has disgraced and by the hands of her own, "the men of her town" (vs. 21; NIV).³⁴ Actually, "the death of the young woman is regarded as cleansing her parents' home from the guilt-pollution arising from her act."³⁵

³² Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 205.

³³ Rousas John Rushdoony, *Commentaries on the Pentateuch*, vol. 5, *Deuteronomy* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2008), 331-332.

³⁴ Samuel Rolles Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 3:256.

³⁵ Ian Cairns, *Word and Presence: A Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 198.

In sum, this account discloses whether the husband was right and the wife is guilty of premarital sex, or the husband wrong in his accusation and the wife is right; in any situation, the story absolutely discourages the practice of premarital sex among young women.³⁶

The protection of female virginity in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 22:23-27 calls a virgin to protect her virginity by resisting rape.³⁷ Two situations may take place in the story which uphold the seriousness of a sexual intercourse with virgins. The first situation could be an engaged virgin who is raped by a man in town (vs. 23). Before the act would be consumed, the engaged virgin must appeal for a help, and surely help would be provided to her since the matter is happening in a town; but if the act is consumed, then both the man and the woman will be stoned (vs. 24). Harman confirms that both were executed at the gate, for the woman for having consented, and for the man who committed adultery.³⁸

It is very important to remark that the voice of the engaged virgin matters as a protection of her virginity and the engagement already made, but if she remains silent, then she is guilty as consenting the act and will be sentenced to death.³⁹ Calvin and Bingham put an accent on this as they explain that if the woman does nothing to protect her virginity, her action would be considered as to prostitute her virginity.⁴⁰

³⁶ Earl S. Kalland, "Deuteronomy," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 3:138.

³⁷ *Rape* according to the law is a crime of sexual intercourse without the consent of the victim, done by force or threat of violence. See, *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed., (2000), s.v. "rape."

³⁸ Allan M. Harman, *Deuteronomy: The Commands of a Covenant God*, Focus on the Bible Series, electronic ed. (Fearn, United Kingdom: Christian Focus Publications, 2007), Laws Relating to Marriage, para. 10.

³⁹ Rushdoony, *Commentaries on the Pentateuch*, vol. 5, *Deuteronomy* 336.

⁴⁰ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2010), 3:79.

Keener advocates that Jewish people regarded a woman's premarital sexual activity as prostitution.⁴¹ In fact, prostitution is a metaphor widely used in the Old Testament as a failure of Israel to their covenant with God. It is the dominant term when apostasy is characterized as illicit sex, the adultery when Israel's relations is outside of its "marriage bond" (the covenant). Accordingly, prostitution is the legal term which applies also to premarital sex.⁴²

The second situation exposed in the story may concern an engaged virgin who is raped by a man; but the action takes place now in a countryside place (Deut 22:25). At this moment, if the act of violation would be consumed, the bible emphasizes in verse 26 that nothing would be done to the young woman. This is because, even if she cried for help as to protect her virginity and the engagement made, no one available or nearby would come to rescue her since they are found in a countryside place (vs. 27). Only the man must be put into death (vs. 25), because the girl had not committed any transgression, for even if she had cried out for help nobody would have heard her.⁴³

The accounts in Deuteronomy 22:23-27 lay a foundation regarding the worth of virginity, 1) virginity must be protected whether a woman is engaged to a man or not; 2) when a woman is engaged, there was to be no sexual union between her and her promised husband, while she is still at her father's house.⁴⁴ In sum, sexual intimacy relationship is very crucial because this is a commitment between a man and

⁴¹ Craig S. Keener, "Adultery, Divorce," *Dictionary of New Testament Background (DNTB)*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 10.

⁴² Elaine Adler Goodfriend, "Prostitution," *TAYBD*, 5:509.

⁴³ Harman, *Deuteronomy*, electronic ed., Laws Relating to Marriage, para. 11.

⁴⁴ Mark Braun, *The People's Bible: Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000), 205.

a woman for procreation. Therefore, it is not to be taken lightly but jealously guarded into marriage relation, and shall be also virginity.⁴⁵

The protection of male virginity in the Old Testament. Genesis 39:6-20 is a very important part of the life of Joseph⁴⁶ related to sexual involvement especially before marriage. The Bible notes regarding Joseph in these terms while he was a servant in the house of Potiphar, that he was strikingly handsome (Gen 39:6; NAB). Hamilton observes that Potiphar may have abandoned, perhaps romantically, his wife.⁴⁷ According to Fruchtenbaum, Joseph may have spent seven to nine years in Potiphar's house,⁴⁸ during which every day the wife of Potiphar (Gen 39:10) comes and invites him to come in bed with her (vs. 7), meaning to have sex, a premarital one as Joseph is not yet married. Eugene Roop comments on the critical condition where Joseph is found as compared to the wife of Potiphar that Joseph had to deal with the reality of power than the danger of sexuality.⁴⁹

On the other hand, Ellen White comments that Joseph's future would depend on his reaction, and see whether or not he would be true to God.⁵⁰ At that rightful

⁴⁵ Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 163.

⁴⁶ The story of Joseph begins in Genesis 37 when he was a young man of seventeen, tending the flocks with his brothers in the land of Canaan (Gen 37:1, 2); and ends in Genesis 50 when he died at the age of a hundred and ten in Egypt (Gen 50:26) as a vizier of Egypt. The term *vizier* is used by Gordon J. Wenham in "Genesis," *New Bible Commentary (NBC)*, ed. D. A. Carson, Richard T. France, J. A. Motyer and Gordon J. Wenham (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2015), 87. Vizier is, the second in authority to the pharaoh, and his office in ancient Egypt was a highly coveted position which existed at the very beginning of the Pharaonic period. Usually, this non-royal but prestigious position was bestowed upon a trusted family member in whom the pharaoh had great confidence. See, Ancient Egypt Online, "The Vizier in Ancient Egypt," accessed 30 October 2022, <http://www.ancient-egypt-online.com/ancient-egypt-vizier.html>.

⁴⁷ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 461.

⁴⁸ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 550.

⁴⁹ Eugene F. Roop, *Genesis* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987), 257.

⁵⁰ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), 217.

time, Joseph refused (Gen 39:9; NIB). His reply is a moral and religious reasoning as he refused to sin against God and his master.⁵¹ Yet, the wife of Potiphar persisted and one day she forced Joseph, making him to flee and leaving his coat in the hand of the wife of Potiphar (vs. 12). The results of Joseph's decision were accusation and prison (vss. 14-20). The Bible says that Potiphar took him and put him in prison (Gen 39:20, NIB). Joseph preferred the risk to his life, rather than to be guilty of evil before God.⁵² Thus, he chooses to suffer innocently in the prison which becomes the high road to power and glory.⁵³ White's comments are very significant when a young virgin man is facing a decision to avoid premarital sex. She advises that the reply of Joseph reveals religious principle. He did not want to betray the confidence of his master on earth, but more importantly, he would be true to his heavenly Master who was watching.⁵⁴ Accordingly, Ben Toh thinks that Joseph knew having sex for physical satisfaction was weakening.⁵⁵ He was determined to do right and resolutely resisted the temptation.⁵⁶

The consequence of abusing virginity in the Old Testament. Another account is found in Deuteronomy 22:28, 29. The story concerns a virgin who is not engaged to anyone. But it happens that she had been abused by a man, and they were discovered. At that time, the man "must marry the girl, for he has violated her" (vs.

⁵¹ Rushdoony, *Commentaries on the Pentateuch*, vol. 1, *Genesis*, 246.

⁵² John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Genesis* (electronic ed.), "Genesis 39:1-23," <https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom02/calcom02.xvii.i.html?highlight=genesis%2039.11&queryID=25682843&resultID=113990#highlight>.

⁵³ Arno C. Gaebelien, *The Annotated Bible: Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 2009), 1:79.

⁵⁴ White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 217.

⁵⁵ Ben Toh, "The Hidden God, Joseph's Temptation-Gen 39:1-23," accessed 30 October 2022, <http://westloop-church.org/messages/old-testament/15-genesis/274-the-qhiddenq-god-part-iii-josephs-temptation-gen-391-23>.

⁵⁶ "She Spoke to Joseph Day by Day" [Gen 39:10], *SDABC*, 1:439.

29; NIV), and he cannot never divorce as long as he lives. The evidence from this account is that the penalty afflicted to a man who raped a virgin is not light.

Deuteronomy 22:29 enumerates what the offender must do: 1) paying fifty shekels of silver to the girl's father as a bride-price; 2) marrying the girl; and 3) keeping her as his wife as long as he lives and she cannot be divorced.⁵⁷ Braun makes clear the reason why punitive consequences must be admitted to a man who rapes a virgin who is not engaged. Braun declares that the intention of God is to warn any man that he may be tempted strongly to indulge in sexual desire, the law reminded him to quit straight the temptation.⁵⁸ Without a doubt, this section of the Scriptures reveals a demand for any human beings to achieve their very best in their way of thought, energy, action, openness, and receptivity.⁵⁹ Accordingly, it is clear that the intention of this story is to deter sexual immorality and reminds the importance of marriage and the family in the life of Israel as a nation and as God's people.⁶⁰

To summarize this part which discussed about the three cases exposed in Deuteronomy 22:13-29 in connection with the worth of virginity, Tigay describes that the main concern of every law in any of the cases is to protect the girl and her father from loss of virginity and its harm.⁶¹ The exact site of execution in verse 21 indicates parental duty for the sexual conduct of their children which inspires premarital sexual purity and sexual abstinence before entering into marriage.⁶² Thus, any father and

⁵⁷ Kalland, "Deuteronomy," 3:139.

⁵⁸ Braun, *The People's Bible: Deuteronomy*, 206-207.

⁵⁹ Cairns, *Word and Presence*, 200.

⁶⁰ Paul E. Brown, *Deuteronomy: An Expository Commentary* (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2008), 174.

⁶¹ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 208.

⁶² Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, Word Biblical Commentary 6B (Dallas, TX: Word Books Publisher, 2002), 522.

parents must remember their role as the decision-maker and defender of their daughter since covenant children must have covenant morality.⁶³ In one word, in the modern sexual revolution, the laws on premarital sex in this text teaches that parents are to be concerned with the actions of their children in matters of sexual conduct.⁶⁴ Keener brings a vital aspect of the worth of virginity as well as the shared responsibilities of the parents and the children in the Greco-Roman world: fathers slew their daughters who were suspected of fornication.⁶⁵

Holiness must be combined with virginity. In the Old Testament, holiness is defined primarily as a concept that is consistent with God and His character.⁶⁶ When a priest is to marry, virginity is a must according to Leviticus 21:13-14 (NAB). The Bible declares that the priest marry a virgin; marriage with a prostitute is prohibited as well. Kleinig explains that because the Lord is *holy* (Deut 21:8), He dwells in His *sanctuary* (Deut 21:12) and He *sanctifies* His people (Deut 21:8, 15), so it is with the priests who have that same status as *to be holy* (21:6) to both God (21:6, 7) and the Israelites (21:8).⁶⁷ Very important are the comments of Richard Davidson on the high value of virginity related to the marriage of a priest. He emphasizes that the instructions given to the high priest on his marriage partner is to be limited to a virgin because of the rationale given in Leviticus 21:10-12 is that the high priest is set apart, and his position of holiness must reflect in marriage with wholeness, that is, a virgin.⁶⁸ On the other hand, Kleinig suggests two reasons why the high priest was not

⁶³ Rushdoony, *Commentaries on the Pentateuch*, vol. 5, *Deuteronomy*, 337.

⁶⁴ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, 523.

⁶⁵ Keener, "Adultery, Divorce," *DNTB*, 10.

⁶⁶ David P. Wright, "Holiness," *TAYBD*, 3:237.

⁶⁷ Joshua W. Kleinig, *Leviticus*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 449.

allowed to marry some categories of woman such as a widow, a divorced woman, and a prostitute, where defilement has been involved (Lev 21:14). The first is that such a woman have previously an attachment to another man; and the second is to protect the sanctity of the priesthood by protecting the holiness of the priests and their children.⁶⁹ That means that virginity is a mark of loyalties from which the wife of a high priest cannot bring alien experiences to her calling as a wife of God's servant.⁷⁰ Freedman adds that Israel in what they think as right occupation was to preserve the purity of the land where they are; because if they indulged the same behavior as the nations before them, the defiled land would vomit them out as it vomited out those nations (Lev 18:28).⁷¹ This is the reason why Jewish men including priests and high priest commonly seem to have preferred virgins.⁷² The point is very important, virginity is a life matter for one and all even the nation because Israel is called *virgin* to express metaphorically the status of the nation in the eyes of the Lord.⁷³

New Testament Principles

The New Testament does offer strong sexual principles that can be applied to the main subject of the study which is premarital sex principles. This part then discusses on sexual behaviors according to Jesus and the Gospel as well as well as

⁶⁸ Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament*, (Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 340.

⁶⁹ Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 452-453.

⁷⁰ Rushdoony, *Commentaries on the Pentateuch*, vol. 3, *Leviticus*, 281.

⁷¹ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Sex and Sexuality," *TAYBD*, 1146.

⁷² Craig S. Keener, "Marriage," *DNTB*, 684.

⁷³ William D. Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (2006), s.v. "Virginity."

according to Paul and the Epistles. It ends with the worth of virginity as viewed by the New Testament.

Sexual behaviors according to Jesus and the Gospel. The teachings of Jesus in the Gospel are pivotal regarding sexual behaviors principles. Jesus spoke positively of sexual union between a husband and wife joined in marriage as one flesh.⁷⁴

Jesus on prohibition from committing adultery. In Matthew 5:27-30, Jesus reaffirms the prominence of the commandment to not commit adultery (Exod 20:14).⁷⁵ Pentecost notes that, “In Matthew 5:27-32 ... in a day when premarital and extramarital sex are common, we need to remember that a holy God forbids immorality. God is vitally concerned with the preservation of marriage and of the home.”⁷⁶ In fact, Jesus in this context applied *adultery* to the thought and intent of the heart. Adultery results most from thought into action: lust is (beginning of) adultery.⁷⁷ In that teaching then, lust or any other impure sexual thoughts are the equivalent of adultery,⁷⁸ Freedman emphasizes that lust and adultery are prohibited.⁷⁹ Pentecost comments on the meaning of the commandment in this way,

There must have been multitudes there who had not committed the physical act of adultery—had not been guilty of either premarital or extra—marital sex—who sought the Lord’s approval and His pronouncement of their acceptability to God. For these He interpreted what the commandment meant. It meant not only that a man was to refrain from the physical act but also to refrain from a lustful glance.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Harold, *Sex in the Bible*, 35.

⁷⁵ The reaffirmation that Jesus made can be found on the dialogue He was engaged with the rich young man or the rich ruler in Matt 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22 and Luke 18:18-23.

⁷⁶ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Design for Living: Lessons in Holiness from the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 99.

⁷⁷ B. Ward Powers, “Adultery,” *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 379.

⁷⁸ James Montgomery Boice, *An Expository Commentary: The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 1, *The King and His Kingdom (Matthew 1-17)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 89.

⁷⁹ Raymond F. Collins, “Marriage (New Testament),” *TAYBD*, 4:569.

Pentecost extends his explanation asserting that the world adopted the standards of man and freely approves premarital and extramarital sex; and men call that freedom. Instead, God calls such a bondage of sin contrary to His standard which demands conformity not only in act but also in thought and in desire.⁸¹ Jesus in Matthew 5:17, 18 confirms that He has not come to abolish the law but only to fulfill. Therefore, Jesus in this teaching based on Exodus 20:14 refers undoubtedly to adultery or fornication which is a broad term including most forms of sexual expression outside a covenant of marriage.⁸² That upholds the fact that sexual intercourse is intended to be joyfully experienced only within marriage.⁸³

Jesus and His teaching on divorce. In Matthew 19:3-12, Jesus was asked by the Pharisees about the reason for a man to divorce his wife (vs. 3). The introduction part of Jesus' response in verses 4-6 concerns the nature of marriage as part of God's plan. Jesus refers to creation texts, Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, to argue that the precise purpose of marriage is to demonstrated a covenant with God's promise and blessing.⁸⁴ Wiersbe describes that Jesus referred back to Genesis at the time when God instituted the first marriage to teach about what marriage is. He emphasizes that marriage God's appointed way for a man and a woman to enjoy sex.⁸⁵ For Jesus, marriage represents a commonness of husband and wife who are united together physically through the sex

⁸⁰ Pentecost, *Design for Living*, 103.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

⁸² Roger E. Van Harn, ed., *The Lectionary Commentary: Theological Exegesis for Sunday's Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 36.

⁸³ Boice, *An Expositional Commentary: The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 1, *The King and His Kingdom*, 90.

⁸⁴ Richard B. Gardner, *Matthew*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 289.

⁸⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1, *Matthew - Galatians* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 68-69.

act. It is not for boyfriend and girlfriend to be one flesh but for husband and wife. Sexual intercourse is merely for married partners and the violation of this perspective has resulted in many divorces.⁸⁶

The synoptic gospels relate a spot of a story in relation to sex outside marriage. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus permits a qualified divorce, and remarriage. On the other hand Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18 do not include the exception clause (that is, sexual immorality [Matt 19:9]). According to Mounce, sexual immorality in question is *porneia*.⁸⁷ Razafiarivony states that that *porneia* may refer to a wide range of sexual perversions.⁸⁸ Stein insists, it is a much more inclusive term, meaning any unlawful sexual act.⁸⁹ Craig confirms that *porneia* is a broader Greek term for immorality encompassing adultery, prostitution, and any sexual behavior deviating the biblical standard. Premarital intercourse constituted a form of adultery.⁹⁰ Moreover, Steven Tracy advocates that archaeological discovery of Greek papyri reveals that the word has the same meaning as that of the NT: it is used for illicit sexual activity that includes prostitution, adultery, and premarital sex.⁹¹ Despite the fact that divorce and remarriage are not the main focus of this study, the important element related to Jesus' teaching on these subjects are very foundational regarding premarital sex. In

⁸⁶ John G. Butler, *Analytical Bible Expositor: Matthew*, vol. 10, *Matthew to Mark* (Clinton, IA: LBC Publications, 2008), 314.

⁸⁷ Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, s.v. "Sexual Immorality."

⁸⁸ Davidson Razafiarivony, *Divorce and Remarriage Saying with Its Exceptive Clause (Matthew 19:9) in Light of Second Temple and Rabbinic Literatures* (unpublished article), 14.

⁸⁹ Robert H. Stein, "Divorce," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels (DJG)*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 195.

⁹⁰ Keener, "Adultery, Divorce," *DNTB*, 10.

⁹¹ Tracy, "Chastity and the Goodness of God," 59.

Matthew 19:6, Jesus says the two who are joined in marriage become one flesh. Price makes an important point saying,

The result of marriage is described as ‘they are no longer two but one’. This is more than the physical oneness of sexual union, but the deeper oneness of soul and spirit as well as body. That union is described as a divine act fulfilling a divine purpose, ‘What God has joined together let man not separate.’ The description of marriage as the union of two people ‘God has joined together’ does not refer only to marriage between two people who have concluded this to be God’s specific will for them, but to marriage itself.⁹²

The teaching’s strategy of Jesus introduces an important theological principle regarding sexual standards.⁹³ The very important principle is summarized by Gagnon advocating that,

Jesus’ sayings about divorce and remarriage have implications for sexual purity in other areas. *Fornication*, sexual intercourse between unmarried persons, is obviously ruled out of bounds since Jesus’ sayings on divorce and remarriage aim at restricting sexual intimacy to one person in marriage until the death of the partner dissolves the union (cf. Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:39-40). Allowing premarital or nonmarital sexual intercourse would essentially inflict a “marriage penalty,”⁹⁴

Sexual behaviors according to Paul and the Epistles. The references to sexual issues debated by Paul reflects the negligent sexual behaviors of Hellenistic society. Paul clearly advocates a life of sexual misconduct and the kingdom of God are incompatible.⁹⁵ This part expands on 1 Corinthians 6:18, 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 and 2 Timothy 2:22.

1 Corinthians 6:18. Paul clearly expresses himself in 1 Corinthians 6:18, saying “Flee fornication” (KJV). Paul knew the fact that some of the Corinthians were practicing sexual sins; yet, they were justifying themselves on the ground of Christian

⁹² Charles Price, *Focus on the Bible: Matthew* (Escondido, CA: The Ephesians Four Group), s.v. “Divorce and Discipleship 19:1-30.”

⁹³ Gagnon, “Sexuality,” *DTIB*, 741.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 742.

⁹⁵ David F. Wright, “Sexuality, Sexual Ethics,” *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters (DPL)*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 871.

liberty which Paul deals with.⁹⁶ In this verse, the Greek word *porneia* is referred to fornication.⁹⁷ Utley explains that it is unique that the verb accompanying the word *porneia* is in present, active, and imperative, without a syntactical connection with what comes before or after.⁹⁸ Moreover, Stein pointed out that *porneia* cannot be equated with *adultery* (the word for adultery is *moicheia*). In 1 Corinthians 6:9,⁹⁹ *porneia* is distinguished from *moicheia*, a specific term denoting adultery; therefore, *porneia* is an inclusive term denoting all unlawful sexual acts. These terms are not synonyms, even though *moicheia* is included in *porneia*.¹⁰⁰ In that reasoning, Utley continues expanding that human sexuality has been given by God as a gift, and Paul affirms marriage by quoting Gen 2:24 (vs. 16), and firmly set the limits on sexual intercourse outside marriage. Believers must live transformed sexuality lives.¹⁰¹ Gingrich reminds that the body of a believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19); thus, *fornication* as does no other sin defiles the temple of God, the body of a believer and separates it from Christ.¹⁰² In fact, Paul's message about marriage is highly significant, that for him there is no acceptable context for sex except within marriage.¹⁰³

⁹⁶ Roy E. Gingrich, *The Book of 1 Corinthians* (Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 2000), 27.

⁹⁷ “πορνεία [1 Cor 6:18]” (Norfolk, VA: Bible Works, 1992-2008), Bible Works 8.

⁹⁸ Bob Utley, *Paul's Letters to a Troubled Church: I and II Corinthians* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2002), 76.

⁹⁹ Some cases of that same distinction between *porneia* and *moicheia* are found in Matthew 15:19, Mark 7:21-22 and Hebrews 13:4.

¹⁰⁰ Stein, “Divorce,” *DJG*, 195.

¹⁰¹ Utley, *Paul's Letters to a Troubled Church*, 76.

¹⁰² Gingrich, *The Book of 1 Corinthians*, 28.

¹⁰³ Wright, “Sexuality, Sexual Ethics,” *DPL*, 873.

1 Corinthians 7:8-9. Paul says that that he prefers people do not marry but if they cannot, marrying is better than burning. The principles given here are valuable to individual groups belonging to the community, all those who are not yet married.¹⁰⁴ It is better to understand that in the Greek, Paul employs the masculine gender for those unmarried. That means that the unmarried are includes both men and women who are single.¹⁰⁵ Paul's advice to them is to stay unmarried if possible. But with temptation in mind, he advises such individuals to marry if they cannot control themselves (1 Cor 7:9). Paul is significantly practical by emphasizing that it is better to marry to avoid sexual immorality.¹⁰⁶ According to Garland, Paul marriage is the remedy to satisfy sexual urges.¹⁰⁷ The very precious and practical idea that Paul conveys to the unmarried is well summarized by Simon Kistemaker. He deliberately develops that God created Adam and Eve and their descendants with sexual needs that are met through conjugal union in marriage and that in it, sexual needs are met for the couple to live a balanced life full of joy and happiness, free from sexual sins.¹⁰⁸

2 Timothy 2:22. Paul addresses to Timothy to flee from evil desires of youth (NIV). When Paul wrote these words, Timothy must was still young especially in relation to the position of trust and responsibility which he occupied.¹⁰⁹ The apostle Paul was concerned that Timothy as a young man live an exemplary life of a Christian

¹⁰⁴ Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975), 119.

¹⁰⁵ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993), 217.

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth Schenck, *1&2 Corinthians: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2006), 112.

¹⁰⁷ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 273.

¹⁰⁸ Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 219.

¹⁰⁹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001), 271.

in such manner that he would not bring reproach to the church. Paul's message was clearly total abstinence from sexual pleasures until marriage.¹¹⁰

The worth of virginity in the New Testament. Virginity is used several times in the NT. This part will reflect on few of them related to the study of premarital sex intercourse. The texts will be based mainly on Matthew 1:18-25, 1 Corinthians 7:25-40, 2 Corinthians 11:2, and Revelation 14:4.

Virginity in the Gospel. The authors of both Matthew and Luke emphasize that Mary, the mother of Jesus conceived Him while she was still a virgin (Matt 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38). The account reveals the perspective of Joseph regarding the matter. One comment recognizes the agony of Joseph who wanted to live a life according to God's will.¹¹¹

In fact, according to the Jewish law, a man whose fiancée was pregnant would divorce her. The Bible notes Joseph intended to divorce her quietly (Matt 1:19, NIB). But the angel prevented the divorce by assuring Joseph that Mary was still a virgin, as the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit (vs. 20).¹¹² The Bible reveals that they married but did not unite sexually until Jesus was born (vss. 24-25). Hayford clarifies that,

Virginity in the Epistles. Virginity alludes in 1 Corinthians 7:25 which reads, "Now concerning virgins." Hawthorne specifies that they may be single women and perhaps men also, who have had no sexual experience.¹¹³ In fact, from 1 Corinthians 7, virginity in a woman was highly valued before marriage. Women were mainly

¹¹⁰ Jack W. Hayford, *Hayford's Bible Handbook* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), s.v. "Stewardship."

¹¹¹ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), 130.

¹¹² See Hayford, *Hayford's Bible Handbook*, s.v. "Virgin Birth."

¹¹³ Wright, "Sexuality, Sexual Ethics," *DPL*, 874.

blamed for sexual immorality.¹¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 7:1 note that it is not good to marry. Other versions speak of “touch a woman.” *Touch a woman* is not to be taken literally, but it is a euphemism for sexual intercourse referring to the whole idea of the sanctity of the marriage relationship.¹¹⁵ In two passages Paul uses the word “virgin.” In 1 Corinthians 7:36-38, Paul writes of a man who has a virgin, and he is uncertain whether to marry her (to another?) or not. There is a problem of translation and interpretation: the passage leaves unclear whether the man is the father of the young woman or her fiance (RSV has “unmarried” in v 25, “girl” in v 28, and “betrothed” in vv 34, 36, 37, 38). In either case, physical virginity is not the issue. Paul thinks, at that point, that one need not bother about marriage since the world will soon end.¹¹⁶

Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:25-40 relates virginity as part of perfection in spiritual life. Consequently, male and female virgins symbolized the image of purity and innocence. Virgins were referred to as married to Christ, and their love as well as their service were honored as being established upon a total devotion and unselfishness to get rid of evil. Virginity was viewed as a seal of God’s special grace for his chosen ones, with assurances of a special salvation for virgins.¹¹⁷

In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul writes that he has betrothed the church to one husband (Christ), to present her as a virgin to Him. Paul compares the Christian community of Corinth to a chaste virgin or a “pure bride” (RSV) that Paul has promised to Christ.¹¹⁸ The metaphor of marriage is used here because marriage among

¹¹⁴ “Is Premarital Sex a Sin? Bible Scholars Respond,” accessed 31 October 2022, <https://seedbed.com/is-premarital-sex-a-sin-bible-scholars-respond/>.

¹¹⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1993), s.v. “ἅπτομαι *háptomai*”

¹¹⁶ Schmitt, “Virgin,” *TYBD*, 6:854.

¹¹⁷ James F. Bound, “Virginity, Chastity,” *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, ed. David Lyle Jeffrey (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 812.

the Jews in the days of Paul involved two separate ceremonies, the promise and the nuptial ceremony which consummated the marriage. Generally, a year separated the two but during that period the girl was considered legitimately as the man's wife, while socially she remained a virgin.¹¹⁹ As a matter of fact, Paul's desire was that the Corinthians should remain faithful (chaste) until the time she is presented to Christ as the bride, because the contrary would discredit him.¹²⁰

Virginity in Revelation. The last occurrence of the term virgin in the New Testament is in Revelation 14:4. The passage describes the 144 000 followers of the Lamb who are virgins. According to Freedman, faithful ones refer to both sexes here.¹²¹

As a matter of fact, Revelation 22:15 records that those who practiced sexual immoralities are rejected outside the city. This verse underlines the importance of virginity as it enumerates the kind of persons who are *not allowed* to enter the city, and fornicators are among them.¹²² The apostle John reveals their reward: their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur (Rev 21:8; NRS).

Spirit of Prophecy Principles

Through the next few pages, discussion will be based on the perspectives of Ellen White,¹²³ from her books as well as some compilations regarding sexuality. In

¹¹⁸ Schmitt, "Virgin," *TAYBD*, 854.

¹¹⁹ Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 8 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 177-178.

¹²⁰ Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of Second Corinthians* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1995), s.v. "2 Cor 11:2."

¹²¹ Schmitt, "Virgin," *TAYBD*, 6:854.

¹²² Ronald L. Trail, *An Exegetical Summary of Revelation 12-22*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 232.

¹²³ Ellen White is a cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a writer, a lecturer, who possessed what Seventh-day Adventists have accepted as the prophetic gift. She was born on

fact, she did write mostly on Christian moral and character which can be a real ground to avoid premarital sex. However, it is to be noted that Ellen White lived in days of great limitation to speak publicly or to write about sex and the sexual relationship.¹²⁴ Stor unfolds that it was in the 1860's that she began to discuss matters relating to sex. When she speaks positively of sexual intercourse in marriage, she employed the terms "privilege of the marriage relation," or "privilege of the family relation, or "sexual privileges."¹²⁵

Marriage and Christian character. Ellen White clearly introduces the ground where the actual society is, when she advocates that marriage has been abused, which in itself was a sign of the last days.¹²⁶ Satan is busy to hurry inexperienced youth into marriage. But when the sacred nature of marriage is understood, it comes with heavenly approval. And the consequence will be happiness as God is glorified. Effectively marriage affects life in this world and there after come.¹²⁷ Therefore, "it is safe to do these things only in the fear of God. We should

November 26, 1827 in Gorham, Maine; and got married to James White on August 30, 1846. She died at her Elmshaven home in St. Helena, California on July 16, 1915, and was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery, Battle Creek, Michigan. See, Dennis Fortin and Jerry Moon, eds, "Ellen G. White," *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013), 549. Moon and Kaiser stated, "Ellen White was one of the most remarkable women in nineteenth-century America. Her lasting significance is attested by various well-documented accomplishments." See, Jerry Moon and Denis Kaiser, "For Jesus and Scripture: The Life of Ellen G. White," *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013), 18. Moreover, Rice points that she was a literary phenomenon because by the time of her death, "her literary corpus included 26 books, approximately 200 tracts and pamphlets, more than 5,000 periodical articles, 6000 typewritten letters and general manuscripts, plus diaries and journals, totaling approximately 100,000 pages of material from her 70-year ministry. See, George E. Rice, "Spiritual Gifts," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 636.

¹²⁴ Ellen White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1977), 218.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ellen White, *Living by Principle* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2002), 21.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 21, 25.

live in this world with reference to the eternal world.”¹²⁸ Ellen G. White counsels in the following will be beneficial to young people in order for them to double check their behaviors compared to premarital sex intercourse.

1. Abstain from appearance of evil: Youth need to discipline their mind.¹²⁹
2. Influence of corrupting books and pictures:¹³⁰ Anyone who do not want to be Satan’s victims must guard their soul.¹³¹
3. No time for corrupt impulses: There should not be familiarity of men with young girls.¹³²
4. The foundation of character: The Bible should be the guide for the youth.¹³³ Young people should obey God’s law which reveals His character.¹³⁴ The spirit of young people should be kept pure and the body kept healthy.¹³⁵

When young people engage themselves in premarital sex as defined as moral pollution and disgusting practice, Ellen White warns that these are vices that destroy body and soul, so young people must learn the discipline of self-restraint.¹³⁶

¹²⁸ White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, 221.

¹²⁹ Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1998; 2002), 150.

¹³⁰ Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), 439-440.

¹³¹ White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, 228-229.

¹³² White, *Daughters of God*, 150-151.

¹³³ White, *Living by Principle*, 3.

¹³⁴ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church Containing Messages of Warning and Instruction to Seventh-day Adventists* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2002), 7.

¹³⁵ Ellen White, *Testimony Relative to Marriage Duties, and Extremes in the Health Reform* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2002), 11.

¹³⁶ White, *Child Guidance*, 441.

Ellen White's appeal to young people. Ellen White wrote to her son Henry encouraging him to not imitate other boys in their dishonest and mean acts; in fact, he should shun such evil company.¹³⁷ Young people can form good characters and overcome obstacles.¹³⁸

Sexual activity before marriage. Ellen White wrote a very special case of premarital sex intercourse involvement. She told him that such behaviour would give the enemies of the work an occasion to label the church as having loose morals.¹³⁹ Ellen White continues her reprimand and reveals that the sexual act that has been done is a violation of the commandment of God. She counseled them to stop premarital sexual intercourses and marry at once.¹⁴⁰

One thing to never forget is that Ellen White strongly points that when God sends a message and any effect is seen; yet, God designed that message as principles, it is better for the receivers of the message to have never been born.¹⁴¹

Islamic Stand of Premarital Sex

Islamic view of premarital sex intercourse. Premarital sex intercourse is absolutely forbidden in Islam. It is considered as fornication, known as *zina*. In fact, it is a sin and an act against Allah and against one's own sexual organs.¹⁴² Sayyid

¹³⁷ Ellen White, *An Appeal to the Youth* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864), 45.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹³⁹ Ellen White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2002), 117-118.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

¹⁴¹ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church Containing Messages of Warning and Instruction to Seventh-day Adventists*, 59.

¹⁴² Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Marriage and Morals in Islam*, PDF file, n.d., Islamic Education and Information Center, accessed 28 October 2022, <http://ijtihadnet.com/wp-content/uploads/5895.pdf>.

Muhammad Rizvi describes the severe sentence reserved for a man and a woman found guilty of premarital sex intercourse: they are put to death.¹⁴³

Consequences of premarital sex. Nowadays, premarital sex is a serious problem. Everywhere, people do not wait until marriage to have sex, but they are not aware of the possible consequences of such an act.¹⁴⁴ Definitely premarital sex intercourse has more side effects than the supposed benefits. It can lead to psychological damage including confusion, depression and regrets. It will haunt a person forever. Once virginity is given away, it gone forever, and that can bring a serious emotional damage.¹⁴⁵ Another consequence is unwanted pregnancies resulting whether into abortion or being in state of teenage parenting full of emotional, social, educational and financial stresses.¹⁴⁶ Besides that, sexually transmitted diseases that disturb the physical well-being of a person is another consequence of premarital sex intercourse.¹⁴⁷ In fact, sexual transmitted disease can kill or cripple people during all their life time.¹⁴⁸ Social problems are among the consequences of premarital sex intercourse. Degraded reputations are inevitable.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ Rizvi, *Marriage and Morals in Islam*, PDF file.

¹⁴⁴ Kibin, "An Overview of the Issue of Premarital Sex in Today's Society," accessed 30 October 2022, <https://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/an-overview-of-the-issue-of-premarital-sex-in-todays-society-gvzdnrxO>.

¹⁴⁵ Kibin, "The Negative Effects of Premarital Sex," accessed 30 October 2022, <https://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/the-negative-effects-of-premarital-sex-j1yCSluV>.

¹⁴⁶ Kibin, "An Analysis of the Downsides of Teenage Sexual Activity," accessed 30 October 2022, <https://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/an-analysis-of-the-downsides-of-teenage-sexual-activity-smn2QpG5>.

¹⁴⁷ Kibin, "A Research on the Topic of Premarital Sex," accessed 30 October 2022, <https://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/a-research-on-the-topic-of-premarital-sex-18HQ8HLg>.

¹⁴⁸ Kibin, "The Bible and the Society's Views on Premarital Sex," accessed 30 October 2022, <https://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/the-bible-and-the-societys-views-on-premarital-sex-C7II3gb3>.

¹⁴⁹ Kibin, "The Negative Effects of Premarital Sex."

In sum, the destructive consequences of premarital sex intercourse for young people are well described in the following statement,

Sexual activity for young people arrests their psychological, social and academic development. Studies show that when young people engage in premarital sex, their academic performance declines and their social relationships with family and friends deteriorate. This is because adolescents are too immature to deal with the explosive sex drive and it tends to dominate their life.¹⁵⁰

Summary

This chapter discussed on the biblical and theological foundations regarding premarital sex intercourse. It has attempted to present the origin of sexuality and marriage, the biblical and theoretical principles against sex outside marriage. These principles can be summarized as follows,

1. Marriage originates from God at the Creation and sexual intimacy is only intended for married persons. Both the Old and the New Testaments call for a firm protection of the valuable virginity as well as fleeing *porneia*, all sexual immoralities including premarital sex intercourse.
2. The examination of the relevant statements from the Spirit of Prophecy has revealed a biblical consistent and clear principles on marriage and sexual intimacy. Ellen White clearly recommends young people to abstain from the appearance of evil, the influence of corrupting books and pictures; and depend entirely on the Bible in order to avoid violation of God's commandments.
3. The Islamic perspective revealed the penalty of premarital sex as the concerned scourge one another a hundred whips in the view of believers. It

¹⁵⁰ Kibin, "Reasons Why Teenagers Should Not Engage in Premarital Sex," accessed 30 October 2022, <https://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/reasons-why-teenagers-should-not-engage-in-premarital-sex-a2M6x0Eb>.

proves that other religion upholds the principle of sexual intimacy within marriage.

4. The side consequences of premarital sex intercourse are mainly physical, mental, educational and social. Physically, sexually transmitted diseases can be contracted or getting into an unwanted pregnancy that may result into abortion, otherwise teenage parenting. Mentally, it can lead to psychological damage like confusion, depression and regrets. Educationally, academic performance may decline resulting in school dropout and uncertain future. And socially, it develops a loose of reputation and respect.

Up to this point, it is very clear that premarital sex intercourse is biblically and socially condemned. The next chapter will highlight a detailed information about the locality of the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy in purpose to put forward a clear understanding of premarital sex intercourse issue.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF LOCAL SETTING

The District of Ambohitafy Locality

The Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohitafy is established in one of the municipalities in Antananarivo, Madagascar. The next pages will situate the locality of the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohitafy, beginning with a very brief overview of Madagascar settings, followed by the development of the contributing factors inducing premarital sex. And, it will end with the presentation of the churches, the schools and the membership inside the District of Ambohitafy with a purpose of making known the evidences of premarital sex intercourse involvement.

The Republic of Madagascar

Madagascar is an island republic in the Indian Ocean, off the southeastern coast of Africa. Madagascar had been made a French protectorate in 1895, became autonomous in 1958 and was fully independent in 1960.¹

Surface Area, Provinces, Regions and Trends

Based on its physical geography, the island of Madagascar has a total surface area of around 591 896 square kilometers. The area encompasses six provinces namely, Antananarivo, Toamasina, Fianarantsoa, Mahajanga, Antsiranana and Toliary. Each one of these provinces is divided into regions, amounted into 22

¹ *Collins English Dictionary*, 8th ed., 2006, s.v. "Madagascar."

regions.² Every region has different ethnic trends especially on the view and practice of sexuality. In general, as far as sexuality is concern, only two trends influence the behaviors of Malagasy people; the *Merina*'s trends and the *côtier*'s trends. Merina are those light-skinned people from the central highland of Madagascar; and the term *côtier* is applied to all people from the entire coastal regions of Madagascar who are usually dark-skinned.³

Population, Demography and Age Group

The current Malagasy population is approximately 29 565 417.⁴ According to Madagascar National Institute of Statistics, based upon the 2021 report, the Malagasy population is rendered demographically about 43.4 habitants per square kilometer.⁵ The largest age group in Madagascar is inside of the 24-54 age bracket which represent 30.8% of the total population. And the biggest age group is between 15 and 24, which accounts for an additional of 20.6%. That means that the Malagasy population is largely made up of young people, from which 3.4% are unemployed and the majority of them leave school prematurely to assist their families financially.⁶

Dialects, Languages and Currency

Apart from the use of many dialects, spoken respectively in every region all over the island area, the formal languages used by the population are Malagasy

² Institut National de la Statistique de Madagascar, "Madagascar en Chiffres," accessed 26 October 2022, <https://www.instat.mg/madagascar-en-chiffres>.

³ Kirsten Stoebenau, "'Côtier' Sexual Identity as Constructed by the Urban Merina of Antananarivo, Madagascar," *Études Océan Indien*, 45 (2010): document 4, accessed 26 October 2022, <https://journals.openedition.org/oceanindien/909>.

⁴ Countrymeters, "Madagascar Population," accessed 26 October 2022, <https://countrymeters.info/fr/Madagascar>.

⁵ Institut National de la Statistique de Madagascar, "Madagascar en Chiffres."

⁶ Integral Human Development, "Country Profiles, Madagascar," accessed 26 October 2022, <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/madagascar/>.

(99.9%), French (23.6%), English (8.2%), and others (0.6%). And the official currency used all over the country is known as Malagasy Ariary (MGA).⁷

The Capital City and its Regions

Antananarivo is the capital city of Madagascar. It is located in the central plateau of the island, which has been founded in the 17th century by a *Hova* chief.⁸

The province encompasses four regions namely, Analamanga, Itasy, Bongolava and Vakinankaratra.⁹ The Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohitafy is located in Analamanga Region.

Analamanga region with its area of 17,488 square kilometers is located in the central highland of Madagascar. This region is divided into eight national districts among which Antananarivo Atsimondrano District is found, where the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohitafy is established too.¹⁰ It is needed to make known that there is a difference between the two districts, one is a national district, Antananarivo Atsimondrano District; and the other is a church district inside the national district locality, the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohitafy. The national district, Antananarivo Atsimondrano District encloses 26 communes,¹¹ and 7 of them encompasses the 18 congregations of the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohitafy. (Discussed later)

⁷ Integral Human Development, “Country Profiles, Madagascar.”

⁸ *Collins English Dictionary*, 8th ed., 2006, s.v. “Antananarivo.”

⁹ Institut National de la Statistique de Madagascar, “Madagascar en chiffres.”

¹⁰ Institut National de la Statistique de Madagascar, “Troisième Recensement General de la Population et de l’Habitation,” accessed 26 October 2022, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKewiRt4fUu6P7AhWOWMAKHQEfDp8QFnoECAoQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.instat.mg%2Fdocuments%2Fupload%2Fmain%2FINSTAT_RGPH3-Definitif-ResultatsGlogaux-Tome1_17-2021.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2pcZQvw2UVI9Hhm6uKFQY8.

¹¹ Tableau de Bord Environnemental, “TBE-Région Analamanga,” accessed 26 October 2022, <https://www.pnae.mg/tbe/region-analamanga.html>.

The District of Ambohijafy¹²

The Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy is among the 52 Seventh-day Adventist Districts within the Central Malagasy Conference.¹³

Its Conference Characteristic

The Central Malagasy Conference is a subsidiary church administrative unit of the Indian Ocean Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Its headquarters is in Soamanandrany, Antananarivo, Madagascar.¹⁴ The Central Malagasy Conference was organized in 1949, reorganized respectively in 1960, 1994 and 2017. And the field territory of the Central Malagasy Conference embraces four national regions namely, Analamanga, Itasy, Bongolava and Vakinankaratra.¹⁵

Churches and Membership Characteristics

The Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy encompasses eighteen congregations, of which 13 churches, 3 companies, and 2 branch Sabbath Schools.¹⁶ These churches are divided and organized into five sectors according to their geographic emplacement in the district area. The first sector is known as East Sector, encompassing four churches. The second sector is West Sector, encompassing four

¹² The present researcher is none other than the pastor of the District of Ambohijafy for four years, from 2018 until now. Therefore, most of the references related to the descriptions about the churches and their situation as developed in this chapter are based on the researcher's own experiences, observations and some interviews.

¹³ Lalaniaina Ratsimbazafy, Executive Secretary, Central Malagasy Conference, interview by the author, Soamanandrany, 26 October 2022.

¹⁴ Vonona Rakotondratsimba, "Central Malagasy Conference," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, accessed 26 October 2022, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=ACZ2#fn16>.

¹⁵ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, "Central Malagasy Conference," accessed 26 October 2022, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=13469>.

¹⁶ In the year 2018, when the present researcher arrived and became the District pastor, the congregations were still fourteen, 10 churches, 2 companies and 2 branches Sabbath School.

churches. The third sector is East Central Sector, encompassing three churches. The fourth sector is West Central Sector encompassing three churches. And the fifth and last sector within the district is North East Sector, encompassing four churches. The membership of all the congregations combined is 2.255, with a total leadership of 48 local elders and leaders.¹⁷ Every first Sunday of each month, a special session takes place, during which church leaders are equipped by receiving visions, objectives, trainings, encouragement and planning from the district pastor. Right after this session, still under the guidance of the pastor, church board meetings for all the churches take place in different classrooms at *Lycée Adventiste Orion*. (Discussed below.)

Schools' Characteristics

There are three schools in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy. The first one is operated by the district itself. It is known as the *Lycée Adventiste Orion*. It comprehends four school levels, namely, preschool, primary, college and high school as based on the Malagasy national education system. Its enrolment per year is more than 300 students, among which only 20% are Adventists and 80% are non-Adventists. In addition, the school personnel are young and approximately 18.18% are not yet married.¹⁸

The second school is affiliated to one of the churches in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy; but it is directly under the direction of the district pastor. The school is known as *Ecole Adventiste Arc du Matin*. Only two of the school

¹⁷ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Membership," *Adventist Church Management System*, accessed 26 October 2022, <https://www.acmsnet.org/Membership/MemberReport>.

¹⁸ Mampionona Raphanoel, General Supervisor of School, *Lycée Adventiste Orion*, interview by the author, Ambohijafy, 26 October 2022.

levels consistent with the Malagasy national education system are established there, namely, preschool and primary. The enrolment per year is about 250 students, of which only 17% are Adventists and the remaining 83% are non-Adventists. Besides that, approximately 41.17% of the personnel are young and not yet married.¹⁹

The last school, known as the *Akany Mikolo Fanantenana Ambohijafy* stands as a center of influence. It has been established in 2019 and sponsored by the Central Malagasy Conference as well as the District of Ambohijafy. This center is mainly reserved for underprivileged children aged of four to six who are non-Adventists. The purpose of its establishment is to educate the enrolled twenty children as well as their unfortunate family members in three areas of life; for instance, spiritual, intellectual and social dimensions. The school level of the center in relation to the Malagasy national education system is preschool. Besides that, each quarter the center receives preschool trainee both male and female who are mostly young and unmarried.²⁰

Realities Motivating Premarital Sex

Côtier's Behaviors Influences

People from the coasts of Madagascar, known as *côtier* (see description above) are people, who are very expressive in their way of speaking, dressing and all aspects of life. As a matter of fact, they have any problem exhibiting themselves in a way that almost show their private parts, whether it is a man and especially young ladies. It has been noted that those women from the coast as known as *côtier* women have the liberty to engage in as much sexual activity as they please without the

¹⁹ Nivoary Ravelomanantsoa, Accounting Secretary, Ecole Arc du Matin, interview by the author, Ambohijafy, 26 October 2022.

²⁰ Nëcha Andriamiarintsoa, Center Head, Akany Mikolo Fanantenana Ambohijafy, interview by the author, Ambohijafy, 26 October 2022.

smallest number of social consequences as based upon their mentality.²¹ The issue is that many of them moved from their own coastal municipalities and installed mostly in two suburban towns, namely *67 Hectare* and *Itaosy*, which are part of the locality where the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy is established.

Many observed that they are in fact engaged into premarital sex as young girls around 16 of age come to consult in a private clinic operated by an Adventist elder because they feel bad; and surprisingly, it happened that they are pregnant and search ways to abort.²² In point of fact, *côtier* women are promiscuous sexual predators²³ and they have influenced a large number of their friends in school to engage in sex too. The researcher observed that at many schools whether public or private, even those operated by Seventh-day Adventists such as the *Lycée Adventiste Orion*, *Ecole Adventiste Arc du Matin*, influences of such compartments happen each and every school year, leading young man and young girls to stop their education prematurely.

Affordable Internet Access

Antananarivo is the most developed province in Madagascar where individuals have greater access to internet. As a matter of fact, it has been noted that cyber-cafes are now extremely common in Antananarivo and more and more women and men can access this tool for creating and expanding social networks.²⁴ Besides that, an individual can get 1 minute of internet access at a cyber-café by paying an

²¹ Stoebenau, “‘Côtier’ Sexual Identity as Constructed by the Urban Merina of Antananarivo, Madagascar.”

²² Andriatiana Razafindrakoto, Medical Doctor, Clinique Médicale Andriatiana Itaosy, interview by the author, Ambohijafy, 30 October 2022. In fact, there are four referral private health clinics established in the locality of the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy are operated by Seventh-day Adventists members.

²³ Stoebenau, “‘Côtier’ Sexual Identity as Constructed by the Urban Merina of Antananarivo, Madagascar.”

²⁴ Ibid.

amount of MGA 30 or \$0.0075. Otherwise, they can pay for data megabyte into their phones for just MGA 200 or \$0.05. The researcher observed in many parts of the locality where the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy is established as supported by many people; most of the young people, male and female frequenting these establishments are there to playing games, advertising on Facebook and watching pornography. However, findings related to experimental research confirms that being long-term exposed to sexually explicit materials increases acceptance of premarital sex, as well as an increase in acceptance of both male and female promiscuity and sex without emotional involvement.²⁵ That is what happens with many young people including young Adventists in the locality of the church district.

Accessibility to Condom Use

In any shops all over the locality where the District of Ambohijafy is established, condoms of different kinds are easily accessible and they are not expensive. In fact, Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina, during a very special event in 2019 in purpose to mark the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Population Fund and the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development declared officially that condoms will no longer be subject to government tax in Madagascar.²⁶ Moreover, based upon the result of a research done on sexual behavior and condom use among university students in Madagascar proves that the participants' average age was 24 years and approximately

²⁵ Ami Rokach and Karishma Patel, "Religion, Culture, and the Evolution of Sexuality," in *Human Sexuality: Function, Dysfunction, Paraphilias, and Relationships* (London: Academic Press, 2021), 7, accessed 26 October 2022, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/premarital-sex>.

²⁶ Hantanirina Andremanisa, "Madagascar Removes Tax on Condoms in Commitment to Ensure Rights and Choices for All," accessed 30 October 2022, <https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/news/madagascar-removes-tax-condoms-commitment-ensure-rights-and-choices-all>.

80% of them reported having sex from the age of 19. For them, condom is beneficial during ovulation periods, indicating a premarital sex.²⁷ In view of that, the researcher and the churches' concierges had observed many times that in the morning after a prayer night vigil, many used condoms are discard behind the church and the toilet buildings. Those condoms have been surely used by young people of the church.

Karaoke Bars and Discotheque Frequentation

The researcher observed in every street corner, karaoke bars and discotheque are very common. These kinds of establishments are described as centers of youthful debauchery where men and women would frequent for inappropriate pursuits and pleasures in alcohol, tobacco or drugs and especially sex. These are localities that exemplified frivolity, mistaken motivations and interests.²⁸ These establishments contribute favorably in premarital sex intercourse because most of young people coming into such places are not yet married; while, the peer and drugs pressures are very high and out of their control.

Membership Evidences of Premarital Sex

Premarital Pregnancies Indication

Findings all over the world put forward that one of the possible consequences of premarital sex intercourse is pregnancy. Sally Audrey's observation is very clear. She remarks that "Premarital sexual intercourse causes teenage pregnancy and result in early or premature parenthood. Teenage pregnancy as a whole may lead to school

²⁷ Onja Holisoa Rahamefy et al., "Sexual Behavior and Condom Use among University Students in Madagascar," *SAHARA-J: Journal of Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS* 5, no.1 (2008): 28-35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17290376.2008.9724899>.

²⁸ Stoebenau, "'Côtier' Sexual Identity as Constructed by the Urban Merina of Antananarivo, Madagascar."

dropout making the education of the victim short and end abruptly.”²⁹ Considering that fact, premarital sex in churches and in schools within the Seventh-day District of Ambohijafy is evidently in existence.

Evidences at Churches

During almost five years of ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy, the researcher witnesses on a yearly basis observation that out of three couples engaging in marriage, one performed premarital sex. During the pre-marriage preparation, when they are asked if they had sex, most of the couples answered back negatively. The reason is, for some they did certainly not experience it; but for others, they just want their wedding ceremony to be held at church during which the young bride will be able to wear a bridal veil. If not, it would be a shame for the family at large. Consequently, they prefer to lie to the church board members who recommend them as well as to the district pastor. However, after few months of not being seen at church, most of the newly married couples carry baby in their hands. That means that they were already pregnant during the wedding ceremony, even before, assuming the existence of a premarital sex among young people of the churches.

Evidences at Schools

At *Lycée Adventiste Orion*, observations and report from teachers prove sex intercourse among students. Usually, it had been remarked that there is a gossip among students, asserting that some of them go into quiet places and have sex. On hearing such a gossip, teachers interrogated the students questioning them on the veracity of the gossip. Many times, they respond negatively but the opposite is seen at

²⁹ Sally Audrey, “Causes and Effects of Premarital Sex and Teenage Pregnancy and Safety Measures to Avoid and Prevent,” accessed 30 October 2022, https://www.teenink.com/opinion/social_issues_civics/article/1140894/Causes-And-Effects-Of-Premarital-Sex-And-Teenage-Pregnancy-And-Safety-Measures-To-Avoid-And-Prevent.

the way they respond. The veracity of the statement that some students are really involved in sex is confirmed by their poor academic performance. The students who have been singled out are those who have a low academic level, and most of the time they drop out the school by themselves. Furthermore, another scene happened at the school. Female and rarely male students report to the office that their friends have sex with such and such teacher. The reason is very simple, they want to have good grades. Separately investigated, the female students responded in the affirmative; the teacher responded in the negative. But with the evidence of the victims, a decision was taken to fire the teacher.³⁰

Besides that, one day, a young man enrolled at *Lycée Adventiste Orion* who is at the same time a member from one church inside the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohitafy approached the researcher. The reason is that by curiosity and out of love, he found himself with his girlfriend performing sex. And now, he needs prayer and guidance because problems related to the act done arose within both homes.

At the second school within the District of Ambohitafy, *Ecole Adventiste Arc du Matin*, the headmistress reports that at some point, one pupil's father has an affair with a young unmarried schoolmistress; which result into a very big problems among the personnel, the parents and of course the church from which this school is affiliated. Moreover, worst is what happened with an Adventist preschool and primary instructor with another young unmarried schoolmistress. In fact, they were caught by some pupils acting as if they were married. That situation brought a very big headache to all the school committee members as well the church board in charge of this school.³¹

³⁰ Raphanoel, interview by the author.

³¹ Lova M. Rasoanjanahary, Headmistress, *École Arc du Matin*, interview by the author, Ambohitafy, 26 October 2022.

Church Discipline Indication

The Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy is a sacred gift from God, it is an integral part of marriage, and reserved only for marriage.³² On the other hand, the church has principles in dealing with its members conducts. The principles can be summarized in the following,

The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy set forth in clear, unmistakable language the solemn responsibility that rests upon the people of God to maintain their purity, integrity, and spiritual fervor. If members grow indifferent or drift away, the church must seek to reclaim them for the Lord.³³

For that reason, the Seventh-day Adventist Church comes up with fourteen biblically based reasons to execute church discipline to its members. One of these reasons is the violation of the commandment “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14, Matt 5:27-28) in relation to any act of sexual intimacy outside of a marriage relationship.³⁴

During five years of ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy, the researcher and the churches’ leaders followed this very important aspects of the churches’ principles and remarked that out of two church disciplines at every church, whether it is by a vote of censure or by a vote to remove from the membership, the reason is always related to premarital sex intercourse confirmed by pregnancy. Two young people at their disciplinary measures’ session testified that many young people are still practicing sex without being married. One member said, “Let what happens to myself be an admonition to all young people because this is a very big sin and a disgrace for my family as well as for God’s glory.” Another young girl in her regret addressed to her fellow young ladies and said, “Please my friends,

³² General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016), 155.

³³ *Church Manual* (2015), 56.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

stop sex even it is pleasurable because the end is what happen to myself now. I am a dishonor to my father, my family and the church leaders who educate me. I am sorry.”

Summary

During the course of this chapter, the researcher conducted on the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy Locality in order to make known the evidences of premarital sex intercourse involvement. It is very clear that the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy is located in the region of Analamanga, precisely in the Malagasy national district called Antananarivo Atsimondrano District, Madagascar.

The Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy is one the 52 districts in the Central Malagasy Conference. It encompasses 18 congregations of which 13 churches, 3 companies and 2 branch Sabbath Schools divided into five geographical sectors. The membership of all the congregations combined is 2.255 under the leadership of 48 local elders and leaders. The district has also 3 schools with a total enrollment of 570 students who are mostly young people. Similarly, the personnel and teaching staff are mostly young and about 59.35% are not yet married.

The most significant part of this chapter concerns the obvious realities motivating premarital sex intercourse; for instance, the *côtier's* behaviors influences, the affordable internet access, the condom use, and karaoke bars and discotheque frequentation. Premarital sex involvement among the membership exists and manifestly confirmed by the number of premarital pregnancies at churches and schools as well as through church discipline.

In view of these findings, without a doubt, premarital sex involvement is a huge issue within the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy. The questions are still valid, what should be done and how should it be done in order to deal with and prevent premarital sex involvement?

CHAPTER 4

STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH PREMARITAL SEX

From the previous chapter, it is very clear that the issue of premarital sex intercourse in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy is a critical one and needs to be addressed. The psychotherapist Amy Morin suggests seven steps in such situation. Three steps can be retained which are related to the issue of premarital sex intercourse within the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy. Firstly, acknowledging the situation; then, developing a plan and changing what can be changed.¹ On the other hand, Liz Makin adds few suggestions to deal with stressful situation. According to him, it is needed to be well prepared by making and writing down a plan as well as taking it into action and being decisive.²

For that reason, the next section will be very significant because a framework as a key strategy to deal with premarital sex intercourse in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy will be developed.

Suggested Strategy

The purpose of this study is to develop a strategy based on a godly premarital education program and offer it to unmarried young people in order for them to refrain from premarital sex intercourse. In point of fact, a strategy is a means to an end or a planning. It encompasses three very crucial components: (1) studying of the situation,

¹ Amy Morin, "7 Steps to Accept Tough Situations in Life," accessed 10 November 2022, <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/7-steps-accept-tough-situations-life.html>.

² Liza Makin, "How to Deal with a Stressful Situation," accessed 10 November 2022, <http://makinithappen.co.uk/Articles/How-To-Deal-With-A-Stressful-Situation.html>.

(2) defining a goal, and (3) drawing up a step-by-step path to get there.³ However, the defined goal related to the strategy has a clear objective and it should be behavior change among young people and the church at large. Wilson and Dobson recommend according to the following arguments,

Effective goal setting is a key component to changing behavior—yours as well as others. When you ask someone to do something, you establish a goal for that person. And by setting a goal, you expect that person to behave in ways that lead to reaching that goal.⁴

For that reason, in order to have a change of behavior among young people and especially for them to refrain from premarital sex intercourse, four principal strategies or methodologies will be adopted and developed in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy. These four methodologies or approaches are: (1) seminars, (2) prayer sessions, (3) self-help and supporting group discussions and (4) virginity pledge.

Seminars

Many have tried to give a definition of a seminar. A common dictionary introduces that seminar is a meeting where a group of people discuss a problem or a topic.⁵ Another definition suggests that seminar is a gathering of people for the purpose of discussing a stated topic. And such gatherings are usually interactive sessions during which the participants engage in discussions about the delineated topic. These sessions are usually conducted by one or two presenters who serve to steer the discussion along the desired path.⁶ But, the most important thing to underline

³ Martin Reeves, Knut Haanaes, and Janmejaya Sinha, *Your Strategy Needs a Strategy: How to Choose and Execute the Right Approach* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2015), 1.

⁴ Susan B. Wilson and Michael S. Dobson, *Goal Setting: How to Create an Action Plan and Achieve your Goals*, 2nd ed. (New York: American Management Association, 2008), 46.

⁵ *Collins English Dictionary*, “Seminar,” accessed 10 November 2022, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/seminar>.

⁶ eVenues, “What Is a Seminar?” accessed 10 November 2022, <https://venues.com/event-planning-guide/what-is-a-seminar>.

is that a seminar may have one or several purposes. In fact, seminar may be for the purpose of education where the participants engage in discussion in order to gain better insight, skills or knowledge. Another purpose of a seminar which is in fact related to the principal objective of this study as to deal with premarital sex is that a seminar can be motivational; and in this case the purpose is usually to inspire the attendees to become better people, or to work towards implementing the expertise and knowledge they have learned from the seminar.⁷

Prayer Sessions

Erika Puni introduces the importance of prayer as based on some characters in the Bible. He understands that the early church, just like Jesus, had it a lifestyle.⁸ Nowadays, the role of prayer is dramatically expanding as God's intention is that it becomes also an ultimate strategy.⁹ Certainly, as a strategy, the important thing to emphasize is that when prayer is employed, people will seek to discern what God wants to happen, and then to pray for that to take place and seek to attune their heart to the heart's desire of God.¹⁰

Self-Help and Supporting Group Discussions

A support group is usually related to medical issues. Ashley Olivine defines and explains the importance of a support group. It is a group that is led by a professional with a goal to overcome and cope with a shared problem.¹¹

⁷ eVenues, "What Is a Seminar?"

⁸ Erika F. Puni, "Prayer Works," accessed 10 November 2022, <https://stewardship.adventist.org/page525>.

⁹ Charlotte Ertelt, *Strategic Prayer - Prayer as a Strategy*, PDF file, March, 1994, accessed 10 November 2022, <https://church-planting.net/FreeDownloads/General%20Church%20Planting/Strategic%20Prayer.pdf>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

In other words, the purpose of the support group discussions is for the young people to support one another in dealing with an issue such as the premarital sex intercourse within the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy.¹²

On the other hand, a self-help group is an informal association of people who come together to find ways to improve their living conditions.¹³ In general, self-help groups usually run independently and are organized by their members who hold regular meetings or by keeping in contact on telephone, email or online groups and forums.¹⁴ Moreover, it is to be emphasized that one of the noted advantages of self-help groups is social integrity which helps to eradicate many social ills such as dowry, alcoholism, early marriage *as well as premarital sex intercourse*¹⁵ (emphasis supplied). In fact, for the success of this project and to effectively lead to the inexistence of premarital sex intercourse among the young unmarried people in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy, it is important that any form of support be at their hand whatever form it may take as they need it. That is what support and self-help groups provide;¹⁶ for within the groups, young people are able to talk with others who truly understand and share the type of practical insights that can only come from firsthand experience.¹⁷

¹¹ Ashley Olivine, “What Is a Support Group?” accessed 17 November 2022, <https://www.verywellhealth.com/support-group-5205220>.

¹² Thewellproject, “Starting a Support Group,” accessed 18 November 2023, <https://www.thewellproject.org/hiv-information/starting-support-group>.

¹³ BYJU'S, “Self Help Groups (SHG) – Definition, Origin, Function, Need,” accessed 17 November 2022, <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/self-help-group/>.

¹⁴ Self Help UK, “What is a Self-Help Group?” accessed 18 November 2023, <https://www.selfhelp.org.uk/about/what-is-a-self-help-group>.

¹⁵ BYJU'S, “Self Help Groups (SHG) – Definition, Origin, Function, Need.”

¹⁶ Self Help UK, “What is a Self-Help Group?”

Virginity Pledge

Virginity pledge is a public promise made by teenagers and young adults to refrain from sexual intercourse until marriage.¹⁸ In fact, based on studies, virginity pledge is very meaningful because it delays sex intercourse substantially longer for the pledgers than for those who do not make such a public commitment. That means that from a social perspective, taking a public stand on turning down sex offers young people an identity. In other words, virginity pledge works.¹⁹ Certainly, the whole issue is based on the young people's own sexual beliefs, values, attitudes, skills, and intentions. Young people are more likely to have sex if they have permissive attitudes toward premarital sex. But, they are less likely to have sex when they have taken a virginity pledge.²⁰

Based on the understanding of the critical situation related to the premarital sex intercourse within the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy, these four suggested approaches which are seminars, prayer sessions, self-help and supporting group discussion and virginity pledge will be combined, developed and explained together in the strategy description.

¹⁷ Community Tool Box, "Creating and Facilitating Peer Support Groups," accessed 17 November 2022, <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/enhancing-support/peer-support-groups/main>.

¹⁸ Religion Wiki, "Virginity Pledge," accessed 29 December 2022, https://religion.fandom.com/wiki/Virginity_Pledge#:~:text=Examples%20of%20pledges,-True%20Love%20Waits&text=recent%20pledge%20reads%3A-,%22Believing%20that%20true%20love%20waits%2C%20I%20make%20a%20commitment%20to,enter%20a%20biblical%20marriage%20relationship.%22.

¹⁹ Diana Jean Schemo, "Virginity Pledges by Teenagers Can Be Highly Effective, Federal Study Finds," accessed 29 December 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/04/us/virginity-pledges-by-teenagers-can-be-highly-effective-federal-study-finds.html#:~:text=Teenagers%20who%20take%20virginity%20pledges,to%20a%20newly%20released%20study>.

²⁰ Rokach and Patel, "Religion, Culture, and the Evolution of Sexuality," 7.

Strategy Description

The education program as a strategy is based predominantly on seminars supplemented with a prayer session and a supporting group discussion that culminates with a virginity pledge ceremony. The seminars are prepared for churches' leaders and schools' officers as well as all churches' members including young unmarried people in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy.

Seminars' Central Theme and Motto

First of all, it is very important to introduce that the core theme of the seminars program is grounded upon 2 Timothy 2:22, "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." This central theme invites unmarried young people with the help of parents, teachers, and church leaders to flee *porneia*, referring to all sexual immoralities which include premarital sex intercourse.

Moreover, a special motto will be adopted along the seminars program. In fact, it has been proven that motto, a short sentence expresses guiding principles related to the behavior of a person or a group constitutes a driving performance and a constant reminder of positive expectations.²¹ Therefore, the motto that will be adopted as dealing with premarital sex intercourse in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy is, "No to sex before Marriage."

²¹ Ed Helmick, "The Importance of a Motto," accessed 10 November 2022, <https://www.aopa.org/training-and-safety/flight-schools/flight-school-business/newsletter/2020/january/06/importance-of-motto>.

Seminars' Equipment

Equipment is very significant in reaching a goal. Therefore, special interdependent tools will be used as equipment. These tools will be a small guidance booklet, a Facebook page and a virginity pledge card.

Small guidance booklet. A small guidance booklet based upon the contributing factors inducing premarital sex intercourse in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy locality (see chapter 3), as well as the biblical and theoretical foundations of marriage and sexuality (see chapter 2) will be prepared and provided to the young people, parents, teachers, officers and leaders within the churches and the schools at the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy.

The guidance booklet's title will be the same as the motto itself, which is "No to sex before marriage." This small guidance booklet comprehends five topics divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 elaborates two sections: (1) the obvious realities motivating premarital sex intercourse, and (2) the membership evidences of premarital sex in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy. Then, chapter 2 expands on the biblical origin of marriage and sexuality with a special teaching on 2 Timothy 2:22 and *porneia*. Chapter 3 demonstrates the biblical principles against sex outside marriage. Chapter 4 expounds on the worth of virginity for both male and female individuals according to the Old and the New Testaments. And chapter 5 demonstrates what should be the sexual behaviors according to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Facebook page. Since young people fit tightly to Facebook, a special page will be created as a means of self-help and support groups for them to be reminded of the importance of avoiding premarital sex intercourse as far as they are connected. The name of this Facebook page will be none other than the motto of the education

program itself, “No to sex before marriage.” Every communication department director of every church within the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy has to appoint special persons used to Facebook in order to work with the Communication Coordinator of the district to manage and advertise the page in order to have as many as possible young unmarried followers and adherents. The contents of all publications in the page will be the same as in the booklet, but these will be presented in a form of quotations, images, and short motion pictures. This Facebook page will be prepared for young unmarried people to remind them day by day the importance of refraining from premarital sex intercourse.

Virginity pledge card. The virginity pledge card is a special card that contains in one side a special written commitment, and in the other side the motto and the Facebook page. This card will be distributed to all young pledgers and used as a reminder to the commitment that they have made.

Programme and Seminars’ Sessions

The duration of the overall education programme is less than three months long. In fact, one Sunday and nine Sabbath days are needed to complete the all-education programme in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy. Furthermore, the education programme is divided into two, beginning with one month awareness sessions, followed by seminars and prayers sessions which culminate with a virginity pledge ceremony.

Awareness sessions. The awareness sessions are divided into two. The first awareness session is for the officers and the leaders. This session will happen during the habitual district council meeting of the churches’ board members on the first Sunday of the first month. The calling of all churches’ board members to this meeting will be reminded as usual through an announcement sent to the churches on the first

Sabbath of the first month. During that session, all schools' officers and churches' board members and leaders will be awakened and equipped by receiving the visions, the objectives, the trainings, the encouragement and the planning about this project on premarital sex intercourse education from the district pastor. At that time, each church board will take actions by adopting the programme as well as making all resources available. The actions will handle the needed budget to print the small guidance booklet and the virginity pledge card according to the number of the young unmarried people from every church within the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy.

Then, a special awareness session will be provided for all churches' members all over the churches within the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy. These awareness sessions will take place at every church on the second, third and fourth Sabbaths afternoon of the first month. These sessions will be led by each church's first elder for the 13 churches and by the church leaders for the 3 companies and the 2 branch Sabbath Schools within the District. Besides, during these times of awareness sessions at churches, members and young unmarried people will be invited through a Sabbath morning special invitation letter sent and signed by the district pastor for them to prepare to attend and to take part in the seminars that will take place throughout the second and the third months, meaning the upcoming five Sabbaths.

In the course of these awareness sessions, a demonstration of the situation will be expounded for both the leaders as well as the churches' members together with the young unmarried people. The demonstrations will be based upon the realities of premarital sex in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy as discussed in chapter 3 of this study which debates on the description of the local setting.

Realities' demonstrations. The first part of the demonstrations during the awareness sessions will discuss on the obvious realities motivating premarital sex

intercourse in the district, for instance the *côtier*'s behaviors influences, the affordable internet access, the evidence of condom use, and the karaoke bars and discotheque frequentation. Then, the second part of the demonstrations will debate on the membership evidences of premarital sex in the district, elaborating the indications of premarital pregnancies at churches and at schools as well as the church discipline indication. Churches' leaders as well as members and young unmarried people must understand the spiritual seriousness of this issue of premarital sex intercourse within the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy.

Seminars sessions' format. The seminars sessions will take place by sectors. For East Sector, the seminars session will be on the first Sabbath of the second month at the church of Ambohijafy. Then, for West Sector, it will be on the second Sabbath of the second month at the church of Andrambato. After that, for the East Central Sector, it will be on the third Sabbath of the second month at the church of Ambohijanamasoandro. For the West Central Sector it will be on the fourth Sabbath of the second month at the church of Amboatavo. And for the North East Sector, it will be on the first Sabbath of the third month at the church of Avaratsena Cité Itaosy.

Seminars' stages. The seminars as education programme are divided into five stages during the all-Sabbath day session for each sector. The day begins with an invocation, followed by a song and a prayer. Then, a special welcoming based on the motto will be addressed to all churches especially to the young unmarried people. After that, the first stage will start. This stage is just a summary of the awareness sessions exposing the premarital sex realities in the district.

Then, the second stage will take place during which the first topic of the day will be presented. This topic will be on the biblical origin of marriage and sexuality with a special teaching on 2 Timothy 2:22 and *porneia*. After that, the third stage

continues with the second topic exposing the biblical principles against sex outside marriage. The fourth stage develops the third topic on the worth of virginity for both male and female individuals according to the Old and the New Testaments. And the last stage expounds the fourth topic on the sexual behaviors according to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Small groups' discussions. At the end of each stage and each topic's explanations, a special time will be given for debates among group. That group will take the role of a self-help and supporting group discussion. At that time, all attendees will divide themselves into small groups. These small groups are the same as the small groups that are already organized and function well through the Sabbath School classes. In fact, these small groups are organized based upon the age group and the places of residence which constitutes a considerable advantage because they meet once a week, a time that they can use to remind everyone of their decisions as well as praying for these decisions. During the small group time at the end of each topic, questions will be given to steer the discussion among each group that will help them to take a firm decision related to the exposed topics.

In addition, another amount of time is allocated to public questions and answers. During this time, everyone is allowed to ask questions related to the discussed topic in order for them to have more clarifications.

Prayer sessions. Prayer sessions are part of the strategy related to the premarital sex intercourse project. Therefore, every seminar stage begins with a prayer and ends with a very special prayer session related to the topic and its applications. The prayer sessions are divided into three phases: (1) a personal prayer time, (2) a small group prayer time, and (3) an intercessory prayer time. During personal prayer time, everyone prays silently for themselves according to the topic.

Then, the prayer will continue among small groups as already divided according to the Sabbath school classes. During that time, people can pray two by two or as a group, praying for one another. Lastly, the prayer time ends with an intercessory prayer engaging seven people as representative from the audiences. These representatives will be parents namely a father and a mother, church leaders, young man and young lady. During this intercessory prayer time, a father will prayer for all fathers, a mother prays for all the mothers, a young man prays for all young men, a young lady prays for all young ladies, the church leader such as a family ministry director or a women or children ministries director prays for all other churches' leaders, an elder prays for all the elders. And the pastor will conclude the prayer session time interceding for everyone, especially the young unmarried people.

Virginity pledge ceremony. In the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy, a very special virginity pledge ceremony will take place at the end of each of the five Sabbath days' seminars within each sector. At that point in time, under a special solemn melody, all teenagers and young unmarried people, both male and female from the age of twelve will stand in front of the church, putting their right hands in their hearts with their left hands raised up as if they take an oath. Then, with their eyes closed, they repeat the following pledge as read by the pastor: "Believing that marriage and sex originate from God and intended for married people, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, my friends and my church to be sexually pure, protecting my virginity until the day I enter into marriage relationship." At that moment that virginity pledge is done, a special dedication prayer will be offered by the pastor on behalf of all pledgers.

In addition, to conclude the virginity pledge ceremony, virginity pledge cards will be distributed to all pledgers. The virginity pledge card contains in one side the

written commitment and in the other side the motto. They sign the cards, write their names on, and keep these for themselves. As a matter of fact, these virginity pledge cards will stand as a reminder for them in the future. Moreover, each of them will receive a copy of the small guidance booklet.

Summary

Knowing well the situation within the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy, all the way through this chapter, the researcher proposed a godly education program prepared for churches' leaders, schools' officers, churches' members including young unmarried people in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy as an approach to deal with premarital sex intercourse. This education program as a strategy is based predominantly on seminars; but, supplemented with prayer sessions and supporting group discussions, it culminates with a virginity pledge ceremony. The core theme of the seminars is grounded upon 2 Timothy 2:22 and the motto, "No to sex before Marriage."

The duration of the overall education programs is less than three months long. That means precisely one Sunday and nine Sabbath days are needed to complete the entire education program which is divided into awareness sessions and seminars, prayer and supporting group discussion sessions with a virginity pledge ceremony. Besides, special interdependent tools will be used as equipment. These tools will be a small guidance booklet, a Facebook page and a virginity pledge card.

The adoption and the execution of the education programs within the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Education Programs Format

Month 1	Month 2	Month 3
<p><u>Sabbath 1:</u> Announcement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Invitation of churches' board members to their habitual district council meeting on the first Sunday of the month. 	<p><u>Sabbath 5:</u> East Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Venue: Ambohijafy •Churches involved: Ambohijafy, Ambodiampanga, Ampasika, Ambohidahy. 	<p><u>Sabbath 9:</u> North East Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Venue: Avaratsena Cité •Churches involved: Avaratsena Cité, Ankadimanga, Marobiby, Imerimandroso.
<p><u>Sunday 1:</u> Awareness session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Led by the district pastor to the churches' board members, •Adoption of the program through actions taken by each church's board. 	<p><u>Sabbath 6:</u> West Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Venue: Andrambato •Churches involved: Andrambato, Andohatanjona, Ambodifasika, Ambohibotetaka. 	<p>•Seminars' sessions programs for each sector from Sabbath 5 to 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Invocation, song and prayer, ✓ Welcoming based on the motto. ✓ Five seminars' stages, followed each with supporting group discussions, prayer sessions and virginity pledge ceremony.
<p><u>Sabbath 2, 3, 4:</u> Awareness sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •For churches' members with young unmarried people at each church, •Led by the first elder and church leader. •Sabbath morning special invitation for all churches' members sent and signed by the district pastor. 	<p><u>Sabbath 7:</u> East Central Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Venue: Ambohijanamasoandro •Churches involved: Ambohijanamasoandro, Ambaniala, Faliarivo. 	
	<p><u>Sabbath 8:</u> West Central Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Venue: Amboatavo •Churches involved: Amboatavo, Tsararay, Ambohimarina 	

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter concludes the project of developing an educational strategy to address premarital sex intercourse in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy. This chapter comprehends three sections: a summary, a conclusion, and some recommendations.

Summary

During the course of this project, the researcher begins with the introduction of the study. Its overview of the situation relates different researches' conclusions in relation to premarital sex involvement among Seventh-day Adventist young people. Likewise, the statement of the problem reveals that at the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy, premarital sex involvement is a crucial issue as confirmed by premarital pregnancies leading to a number of Church Discipline cases whether by censure or by removal from fellowship among many young people, both male and female, predominantly between the ages of seventeen to twenty-four. That situation raised important questions: *what to do and how to do it to help the young people in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy to avoid premarital sex involvement?* Therefore, the main purpose of this project is to develop a strategy based on a godly premarital education program to avoid premarital sex involvement in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy. The introduction chapter ends with the delimitation of the study, the methodology and procedure as well as a definition of terms.

Then, the second chapter discussed on the biblical and the theological foundations regarding premarital sex intercourse. It is important to emphasize that the origin of sexuality and marriage is from God at Creation and is only intended for married persons. This is why, both the Old and the New Testaments call for a firm protection of the valuable virginity by fleeing *porneia*, all sexual immoralities including premarital sex intercourse. Furthermore, the examination of relevant statements from the Spirit of Prophecy revealed a biblical consistent and clear principles on marriage and sexual intimacy. Ellen White clearly recommends young people to abstain from the appearance of evil, the influence of corrupting books and pictures; and depend entirely on the Bible in order to avoid violation of God's commandments. In addition, Islamic perspective revealed the penalty of premarital sex as the concerned scourge one another a hundred whips in the view of believers, proving that other religion upholds the principle of sexual intimacy within marriage. And lastly, this chapter revealed the side consequences of premarital sex intercourse as mainly physical, mental, educational and social. In fact, physically, sexually transmitted diseases can be contracted; or getting into an unwanted pregnancy that can result into abortion, otherwise teenage parenting. Mentally, it can lead to psychological damage like confusion, depression and regrets. Educationally, academic performance may decline resulting in school dropout and uncertain future. And socially, it develops a loose of reputation and respect.

Chapter three is the description of local setting. It begins with very clear evidence that the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy is located in the region of Analamanga, precisely in the Malagasy national district called Antananarivo Atsimondrano District of Madagascar. Moreover, this chapter exposes that the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohijafy is one the 52 Seventh-day Adventist

Districts in the Central Malagasy Conference. It encompasses 18 congregations of which 13 churches, 3 companies and 2 branch Sabbath Schools, divided into five geographical sectors: East, West, East Central, West Central and North East Sectors. The membership of all the congregations combined is 2.255 under the leadership of 48 local elders and leaders. The district consists also of 3 schools with a total enrollment of 570 students who are mostly young people. Similarly, the personnel and teaching staff are mostly young and approximately 59.35% are not yet married. But, the most significant part of this chapter concerns the obvious realities motivating premarital sex intercourse; for instance, the *côtier's* behaviors influences, the affordable internet access, the condom use, and karaoke bars and discotheque frequentation. That's why, premarital sex involvement among the membership exists and manifestly perceived by means of premarital pregnancies at churches and schools as well as the church discipline.

Then, chapter four of this study offers a strategy to deal with premarital sex intercourse. Actually, knowing well the situation within the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohitafy; all the way through this chapter, the researcher proposed four principal strategies to stand as a godly education program for churches' leaders, schools' officers, churches' members, and especially young unmarried people in order to have a changing behavior and especially for those young unmarried people to refrain from premarital sex intercourse. These four principal strategies are: (1) seminars, (2) prayer sessions, (3) self-help and supporting group discussions and (4) virginity pledge. The core theme of the seminars is grounded upon 2 Timothy 2:22 and the motto "No to sex before Marriage." The duration of the overall education programs is less than three months long, precisely one Sunday and nine Sabbath days to complete the all-education programs divided into awareness sessions and seminars

sessions stages. Special interdependent tools will also be used as equipment: a small guidance booklet, a Facebook page and a virginity pledge card. It is very important to emphasize that this education program is based predominantly on five topic seminars based on the contributing factors inducing premarital sex intercourse in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohimajy locality, as well as on the biblical and the theoretical foundations of marriage and sexuality. Besides, these seminars sessions take place by sectors, and supplemented with prayer sessions divided into three phases: a personal prayer time, a small group prayer time, and an intercessory prayer time. During the supporting group discussions at the end of each topic, all attendees will divide themselves into small groups as based on the small groups already organized and functioned well through the Sabbath School classes, discussing in order to take a firm decision related to the exposed topics. The seminars sessions' day culminates with a virginity pledge ceremony. At that time, under a special solemn melody, all teenagers and young unmarried people, both male and female from the age of twelve will stand in front of the church, putting their right hands in their hearts, their left hands raised up with their eyes closed, they repeat the following pledge as read by the pastor: "Believing that marriage and sex originate from God and intended for married people, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, my friends and my church to be sexually pure, protecting my virginity until the day I enter into marriage relationship." Then, a special dedication prayer will be offered by the pastor on behalf of all pledgers. In addition, to conclude the virginity pledge ceremony, virginity pledge cards and small guidance booklet will be distributed to all pledgers. They sign the cards, write their names on, and keep these for them as a reminder in the future.

Conclusion

During the course of this study, conclusion is drawn that premarital sex is unquestionably a critical issue in the Seventh-day Adventist District of Ambohimajy. For that reason, the present project as the first of its kind within the Central Malagasy Conference and even within the Indian Ocean Union Conference developed a strategy to support churches' leaders, schools' officers, and churches members, especially young people to deal with the premarital sex issue.

The researcher is confident that seminars, prayer sessions, self-help and supporting group discussions with virginity pledge will bring success in dealing with premarital sex intercourse involvement. Certainly, at the end of the development of these four approaches, churches leaders will be more concerned and a changing behavior among unmarried young people will be observed as they refrain from premarital sex intercourse.

Recommendations

Based upon the aforementioned principles developed from chapter to chapter, the researcher proposes the following recommendations,

1. Parents need to remember their parental duties related to the sexual behavior of their children. Therefore, they must get also a special parental education.
2. The adoption of this education program strategy will be beneficial to churches and districts all over the Central Malagasy Conference as well as the Indian Ocean Union Conference. Therefore, the churches' leadership must take actions in order to develop the strategy within their localities.

3. For further study, it is better is to know what induces the young unmarried people to try premarital sex with an aim of supporting them emotionally and spiritually for them to uphold the principle of no sex before marriage.

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VITA

PERSONAL INFORMATIONS

Name: Harsha, DAVIDRA. **Nationality:** Malagasy. **Spouse:** Nècha. **Child:** Meysha.
November 23, 2019: *Ordination to Pastoral Ministry*, by the IOUC.

EDUCATION INFORMATIONS

- 2023:** *Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology Candidate*, AUA, Kenya.
2010: *Bachelor of Theology*, Adventist University Zurcher, Madagascar.
2005: *Baccalauréat A2*, Lycée Galliéni Andohalo, Antananarivo, Madagascar.
2002: *Undergraduate Study Certificate*, Collège d'Enseignement Général Avaradrova, Antananarivo, Madagascar.
1998: *Elementary Primary School Certificate*, Ecole Primaire Publique Antanimbarinandriana, Antananarivo, Madagascar.

CERTIFICATES AND PROFESSIONAL SEMINARS ATTENDED

- January 29-February 6, 2023:** *International Champions Training, Pfumvudza Program Concept*, Foundations for Farming, Glen Forest, Harare, Zimbabwe.
April 25-29, 2022: *La Trinité: Fondement Bibliques, Historiques, Théologiques et Enjeux Contemporains*, Online Course, Université Adventiste Collonges Sous-Salève, France.
September, 2021: *Etudes Exégétiques de l'Évangile selon Jean*, Online Seminar with Dr. Hensley Gungadoo, Avondale University, Australia.
August 10-13, 2020: *South Asian Religions*, Online Training, with SID and GC.
May 20-30, 2019: *Certificate of Merit*, General Conference Global Centre for Adventist Muslim Relations Training of Trainers, SID.
March 14-17, 2018: *Ellen White Colloquium*, Adventist University Zurcher.
March 17-18, 2018: Seminar on Academic Writing with Dr. Michael Campbell.
May 19-21, 2017: *Certificate of Continuing Education on Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries*, endorsed by Loma Linda University.
April 07-12, 2015: *Youth Leadership Summit*, Belle-Mare, Mauritius.

EXPERIENCE, WORK AND SERVICE HISTORY

Mauritius Conference

2023- : *Church Pastor of Quatres Bornes, Bambous and La Gaulette.*

Central Malagasy Conference

- 2021-2023:** *Executive Comity Member; Ministerial Internship Mentor; Departmental Staff of Sabbath School-Personal Ministries-Adventist Community Services and Stewardship.*
2018-2023: *District Pastor of Ambohijafy (18 Congregations).*
2015-2018: *District Pastor of Arivonimamo (20 Congregations).*
2013-2015: *District Pastor of Antsirabe 3 (13 Congregations).*
2011-2012: *Global Mission Pioneer in Avaratetezana (3 Congregations).*
2010-2011: *Global Mission Pioneer in Manjakandriana (3 Congregations).*

Adventist University Zurcher

2017-2021: *Visiting Instructor.*

IOUM-Adventist Printing House

2010-2011: *Volunteer Translator.*