

# What Parents Can Do

LOOKING at their own lack of training and ability, many parents might think it would be easier to leave sex education all to the school. But, then, some conscientious parents are confused. They have heard stories about sex education given without a moral background and they rightly worry. Children are now being told that premarital sex, sodomy and other forms of sexual deviation are normal and, though not desirable, are not to be condemned.

Some advocates say conventional standards of morality are irrelevant. One such claims that "the core of the ethical problem is not whether a boy or girl remains or does not remain a virgin, but whether sex is used exploitatively and self-centeredly, or in a meaningful and dignified way." Is this what you want your child taught? How do unmarried people use sex in a meaningful and "dignified" way if they violate the divine command to "flee from fornication"?—1 Cor. 6:18.

What can you do about the situation? Fight the giving of sex education in the schools? For the true Christian the direction is given: The servant "of the Lord does not need to fight, but needs to be gentle toward all, qualified to teach, keeping himself restrained under evil." (2 Tim. 2:24) If a parent objects to what is being

taught and wants to protect his child, he can ask to have his child released from such classes.

In fairness to the courses taught at some schools, however, it must be admitted that not all is bad. There is teaching in hygiene, disease prevention, care of children, family responsibility, and so forth. Further, there is some effort to refer students to others for guidance, such as the textbook that urges those with concerns about homosexuality to speak to their doctor or some other counselor. It also speaks against "misuse of oneself" in discussing masturbation. But there are veiled statements that leave the reader feeling it is up to each one to decide the matter for himself; there is no honest condemnation of wrong acts.

Christian parents take the course that the text at 2 Timothy 2:24 recommends, namely, to be "qualified to teach." Such parents have learned to be well equipped to combat the misinformation their children get in some schools in the teaching of evolution and the setting of materialistic goals by perhaps well-meaning teachers. With answers given in home training, parents can be confident that their children have a defense.

If your church has not provided you with the information to combat faith-eroding teachings of today and no longer



upholds the Bible as the source of moral teaching, why not find out where you can be taught and trained to aid your children?

### ***Help Available***

Jehovah's witnesses as Christians sense the need to fortify youth and equip parents to fill present-day needs. They take the position that "wisdom is for a protection." (Eccl. 7:12) Repeatedly their *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines have presented articles to aid parents on how to approach sexual matters with their young ones, what to discuss and how to say it. Examples are the articles in *Awake!* of December 8, 1968, and June 8, 1965, on a father talking to his sons and the July 8, 1965, issue on a mother talking to her daughters. These took up such matters as conception, birth, proper use of sexual powers, bodily functions, dating and self-control. Others of their publications also provide helpful instruction, all on a fine basis of Biblical morality.

At their conventions the Witnesses receive frank and straightforward material in talks and even dramas that make application of the points taught. At the 1969 "Peace on Earth" International Assembly sessions they heard talks warning against the illicit satisfaction of fornication and adultery and the dangers of toying with sexual immorality. During 1970 additional counsel along these lines will be given at their assemblies. More worthwhile occupation of time and abilities are set before youthful attenders who are with their parents for this instruction. Yes, it is sometimes beneficial to have group instruction. But the setting must be right, with parents or other responsible adults present and with good motives.

In your home, put information about sex on the right basis. Found it upon the "discipline and authoritative advice of Jehovah." (Eph. 6:4) This is much more

valuable source material than the conceited, always-changing views of humans who call for "new values" as to "when and how we should have sexual experiences." Dr. Mary Calderone, one of the prime backers of sex courses in schools, says: "Separate yourselves from your parents. I don't believe the old 'Thou shalt nots' apply anymore." Is this what you want your children to hear and defenselessly believe? They need fortifying!

### ***Some Suggestions***

Teach your own children that possession of sexual powers brings responsibility to the Designer and calls for respect for his original purpose. Use the Scriptures to show what is honorable use, that these are powers of procreation, a wonderful thing! (Gen. 1:28) Show that there must be deep mutual love between a husband and his wife, a giving that brings pleasure to another and thus disciplines in unselfishness. (Prov. 5:15-23; Eph. 5:21-33) Explain that confinement of one's sexual interests to one's marriage mate is a sound requirement for life.—Heb. 13:4.

As you see from the above Scripture references, the Bible can be used as a source and as a model of tasteful and forceful expression for teaching. Use it and thus counter the influence of declining moral standards.

Give such teaching in a wholesome atmosphere of respect for God and decency. Use proper terminology. Warm teaching, with association of the knowledge to its proper use, is better than detached presentation of cold biological facts with too many details. If children want to know more, they will usually ask. At times ask them questions or encourage them to ask questions. In that way they learn what they want and need to know. Make it a conversation rather than lecturing or preaching. Look up information together.



Be sure the child sees the practical wisdom as well as the obedience to God's law that is involved, that it is not a matter of being prudish.

With discernment several children can be taught together. In this way they come to face the subject without feeling it is a deep, dark secret. After the smaller ones have been simply taught and leave, then the older ones who ask for and need more details can get some elaboration on the matter by the parents. Or, they may select another time, such as when walking home from a visit or shopping, to speak to their children who need information to prepare them for changes in their body or to counter the misinformation they will be hearing from other children.

When is the best time to start with this training of children? Before they start to school. But remember, a small question requires only a small answer. It is unwise to swamp the child with all the clinical details. Make answers clear and direct, honest and simple. Children are quick to detect deceit and hypocrisy. That will result in a loss of confidence. Elaborate only if further questions come. Usually a simple answer suffices.

One of the reasons for not giving them more than they need at such a young age gives basis to some of the strongest objections against forcing the teaching of sex upon children in the lower grades. Age five to adolescence is viewed as the "latency period," when a child's sexual interests are not intense, other things being pursued. It is a time to let a child enjoy growing up, being a child. The child can be damaged or disturbed at this period by unwanted sex talk that can lead to sexual difficulties later on.

Then there is a period in life when more information must be given without waiting for questions from the child. It is when the bodies of youngsters begin to develop

the capacity to carry out the marvelous function of procreation. Children need to be told in advance what to expect. They should be taught what changes will occur in their bodies and in their feelings toward the opposite sex. But again, this should be suitable to their age and need. It is best not to make a "big" thing out of it, either then or with children at other sessions. It should not be made an obsession. A physician and author, Dr. Melvin Anchell, says he can teach all that a child needs to know about sex, giving it the medical viewpoint, in about fifteen minutes. But that is the medical viewpoint; there is also God's viewpoint.

There is another matter that is a parental responsibility. What the parents fail to curb in the way of reading and viewing could damage the child's mind. Do you really know what your child reads? What do others, his school chums, offer him to read? One mother was shocked to find some scandalous material tucked under the mattress of her son's bed. Are you serious about the quality of your son's food? Then be serious about the quality of his reading matter. Comics often exploit sex and violence, as does TV.

#### ***What Your Family Needs***

While the suggestions above may be a help, there is something else you need in order to combat the rising tide of loose conduct and adverse effects of possibly harmful sex instruction. Just as one must have something firm and solid onto which one can fasten a lifesaving rope if it is to be truly useful, so there must be a well-rounded-out knowledge of the Bible if one is to have the background that will give solid support to this kind of parentally taught sex information. This can be had by a regular, weekly Bible study in your home.



Jehovah's witnesses provide this service free of charge, at a time convenient to you in the privacy of your own home, using your own Bible. There is no obligation except to agree to prepare in advance for the best results. The book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* contains the course of study. It takes only about six months to cover the material. The fact that in less than two years this publication has reached the astounding circulation of some 23 million copies in many languages is proof enough that it is supplying a need.

More than a million free home Bible studies are being conducted by Jehovah's witnesses each week all around the world. Why not avail yourself of this fine provision? In this way you can fortify your family with the basis in faith that it needs to endure in this era of sex obsession. It will spare you many heartaches and crises in family life.

Parents, do not let your God-given responsibility toward your children in this or any other matter be wrested from you, either by your own apathy or by the questionable motives of some others. The fact that some advocates of sex education in schools advise their followers to "sneak in" such courses and claim that they are merely expanding already-existing programs

shows dishonesty on their part and does raise questions about their motives.

The effect of sex education can be bad, depending upon the manner in which it is taught and the content of the material. A conscientious parent will acquaint himself with what is taught and know who has edited the material. Thus he will be able to counteract effectively any misinformation that his child gets in classes.

If information given in some programs serves to supplement that which parents are morally responsible to give their children, then it may be good. It can be learned along with related facts and other studies in school.

But in either case, the final effect upon *your* children will be determined in great measure by what you as the parent do to discharge your own responsibility in the matter. Avail yourself of the Bible-study course that will erect a firm foundation of faith upon which you can build the spirituality of your family. Use the timely material in the Watch Tower publications to aid you to teach your children Bible principles. Build all aspects of a close family relationship. The warm, loving atmosphere of Christian family life is the wholesome climate in which to nurture youth to responsible manhood and womanhood.—Eph. 5:15-23; 6:1-4.

### "Plowing with Twelve Spans"

◆ Persons who read the Bible account at 1 Kings 19:19 might conclude that the prophet Elisha was plowing with a team of twelve pairs of bulls. They might wonder how he ever managed to do this. However, travelers in Bible lands have reported some interesting facts about plowing methods there. Considering these reports will help us get a clearer picture of how Elisha plowed.

Since the small plows of the farmers in the Middle East do not make a very deep furrow, farmers there will arrange to plow in company with fellow farmers. One traveler reported that he had seen more than a dozen plows at work in the same field, each with its own plowman and team of oxen before him. Evidently, Elisha was not behind a single plow to which twenty-four bulls were yoked, but he was in charge of the last of twelve plows.