

Curbing Premarital Sex Among Nigerian Youths From The Study Of Joseph's Attitude In Genesis 39: 1-12

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Abstract

Generally, youths are often associated with certain social ills such as drug abuse, alcoholism, premarital sex, abortion etc. Among these, this paper examines premarital sex among Nigerian youths. It highlights the causes and effects of premarital sex among Nigerian youths. However, the crux of the work is to discuss how premarital sex can be curbed among Nigerian youths. These reflections would be done in the light of the popular 'Joseph and Potiphar's wife' story recorded in Genesis 39. Understandably, this study employs the narrative analysis methodology which is mainly used to study biblical passages that correspond with the form of story or narrative. Findings from this work indicate that premarital sex among Nigerian youths can be curbed if the principles applied by Joseph were imbibed by Nigerian youths.

Introduction

Social ills such as examination malpractice, drug abuse, alcoholism, cultism, inordinate ambition, sexual abuse, abortion etc. are common among youths. There is no gain-saying that these vices are generally unacceptable from both cultural and religious view points in Nigeria. Unfortunately, despite the obvious detrimental tendencies associated with these vices, youths actively participate in them. Among these social vices, this work sets out to examine premarital sex which is prevalent among Nigerian youths.

Premarital sex is usually used to refer to any sexual activity done before marriage. Undoubtedly, sexual activity among unmarried youths is one of the major problems confronting the nation as it has led to a rising incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), unwanted pregnancies, abortion, death etc. Some youths begin to indulge in premarital sex from their teens and so grow up to believe that it is difficult, if not impossible to abstain from sex before marriage. Some of the causes of premarital sex among youths have been identified as peer pressure, electronic media, printed media, environmental influence, greed, ignorance, indiscipline etc. Premarital sex occurrences alarm every sector in the society, particularly the religious and health institutions. This work appreciates the efforts of various religious, educational, and social institutions in fighting this anomaly but it is glaring that something is still lacking.

Interestingly, this paper discusses how premarital sex among Nigerian youths can be curbed in the light of the popular "Joseph and Potiphar's wife" narrative recorded in Genesis 39:1-12. Although the major characters of this biblical narrative are Joseph

and Potiphar's wife, more study would be done on Joseph because Joseph was an unmarried youth and the core of this paper deals on such category of people. More so, the lessons that would be drawn from this narrative are based on Joseph's attitude and not that of Potiphar's wife.

This narrative records that Joseph; a key character was handsome and well favoured. However, the climax of this narrative was the concerted efforts of Potiphar's wife to lure Joseph into having sexual intercourse with her and Joseph's ability to overcome the temptation. The Bible recorded that Joseph left his garment in her hand and fled. The major finding in this study indicates that premarital sex can be curbed among Nigerian youths if they apply the principles adopted by Joseph in Genesis 39: 1-12.

The methodology adopted in this study namely, narrative analysis is considered most appropriate because the content of Genesis 39 is a narrative. Obiorah (2008:91) agrees that "one of the methods that one can employ in the study of the Bible, particularly in the exegetical analysis is the narrative approach." This method is mainly used to study biblical passages that correspond with the form of story or narrative. By implication, narrative analysis cannot be used to analyze a biblical passage that falls under the poetic books. Mundele (2012:11) understands that "narrative analysis considers the biblical text as a story that is a modality of communication between human persons." Generally, biblical narratives are not intended to entertain; rather they reveal the character of God and point to a message. About 40 percent of biblical materials are narratives in which divine revelation is vividly expressed (Harrison, 1969).

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF GENESIS 39:1-12

The reflections in the introduction of this work established that premarital sex among Nigerian youths could be curbed from the study of the narrative recorded in Genesis 39:1-12. However, the lessons of this narrative would only be deduced, appreciated and employed as a panacea to this social vice, if an exegetical study of the pericope were undertaken. Exegesis is simply a critical explanation or interpretation of a specific biblical passage. According to Stuart (1992), it is an analytical study of biblical passages undertaken in order to produce useful interpretations of those passages. Genesis 39:1-12 would be exegetically studied under the following sections:

Delimitation of Genesis 39:1-12: In a study of this nature which singles out some verses from a particular chapter of a book of the Bible, it is necessary to delimit the text. Mundele (2012:33) stated that "to delimit the text that one wants to study is the first step the researcher has to do, whatever the method or approach he applies." Ska (1990:1) re-echoes that "one of first tasks of a literary analysis is the delimitation of the narrative units which are sometimes called macro- and micro- units (longer narratives and their subdivisions)" This examines why Genesis 39:1-12 is studied as against the whole chapter or even book. In this sense, Gen 39:1-12 is seen as a literary unit that has a cohesive and significant message in itself. In delimiting a text, a researcher is expected to show that the content of the text in question is distinct from what precedes it and from the one that follows it.

In the book of Genesis, the Joseph narratives start from chapter thirty-seven. However, before this chapter, the name Joseph was passingly mentioned in Gen 30:24-25, 33:2, 7, 35:24. Joseph narratives started with his dreams of greatness and how he was sold to the Midianites by his brothers as recorded in chapter thirty-seven. Following this, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

Joseph's narratives continued in chapter thirty-nine which records that he found favour in his Egyptian master's sight and he was made an overseer in his master's house. In verses 1-12, which is the literary unit under consideration, Potiphar's wife made concerted efforts to have sexual intercourse with Joseph. According to verse 12, he left his garment in her hand and fled. Following this, Joseph was put in prison after his master's wife told lies against him. Other narratives concerning Joseph are as follows;

Chapter 40: Joseph interpreted the dreams of two prisoners.

Chapter 41: Joseph rose to power after he interpreted Pharaoh's dream.

Chapter 42: Joseph's brothers went to Egypt to buy grain following the famine in the land of Canaan.

Chapter 43 -48: These chapters have details of other stages in Joseph's narratives ranging from when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers to when Jacob's entire household came to Egypt.

From the above analysis, it has been made bare that Gen 39:1-12 is a literary unit that is distinct from what precedes it and from the one that follows it. Mundele (2012) used the terms *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* to express that. In Gen 39, only verses 1-12 captured the interest of the researchers as far as the issue of curbing premarital sex among Nigerian youths is concerned. Meanwhile, the climax of the narrative reflected in this pericope is captured in verse 12 which reads that "she caught hold of his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside". The researchers believe that this verse has the capacity to act as a panacea to the problem of premarital sex among Nigerian youths. Ugwu (2012:46) supports that

Many Potiphar's wives have today killed many beautiful dreams. Many young men who would have gone very far into their palaces are today making sport with some women, having forgotten their dream. Many young women today are also into the hands of some dream-killer men. The woman took hold of Joseph's cloth but Joseph did not bother. What is important was his dream and not his cloth.

Context of Genesis 39:1-12: The primary source for the information about Joseph is the book of Genesis. In the delimitation of this text, it was pointed out that the narratives concerning Joseph started from Genesis chapter thirty-seven (37), interrupted in chapter thirty-eight (38) and resumed in chapter thirty-nine (39). Wilfred (2001:409) re-echoes that "the Joseph story with its beginning in Genesis 37 is "interrupted" by the episode of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38), and in Gen 39:1 the main thread of the story is reintroduced by recapitulating 37:36, "Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar . . .," but "here Joseph is the subject of the sentence showing he is now to be the focus of interest".

Genesis 37:3 records that Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age. Consequently, Joseph's brothers hated him because their father loved him more than they. This hatred intensified when Joseph in two occasions related his dreams of greatness to his brothers. Following this intensified hatred, Joseph's brothers plotted to do away with Joseph. When an opportunity presented itself, he was sold to some Midianite traders who later took him to Egypt. In Egypt, the Midianites sold him to Potiphar who was one of Pharaoh's officials. At Potiphar's house,

the Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful man. Joseph also found favour with his master and he was put in charge of all that he had.

Structure of the Pericope: Genesis 39:1-12 has a simple and coherent structure. It has a tripartite structure. The first (vv. 1-6b) relates that the Lord was with Joseph and his master put him in charge of all that he had. The second structure (vv. 6c-10) establishes that Joseph consistently resisted the temptation to have sexual intercourse with Potiphar's wife. The climax of this narrative is contained in the third structure (vv. 11-12) which presents an account of how Joseph overcame a particular sexual advance of Potiphar's wife by fleeing; leaving his garment in her hand.

Close Reading of the Pericope: The structural analysis of Genesis 39:1-12 discovered that it has three parts. The close reading of this pericope would be done based on this tripartite structure which would be titled appropriately.

Joseph finds Favour in his Master's House: This title is considered most appropriate for the reflections in the first six verses of Genesis 39. Joseph's success in his master's house is a recurrent formula in these verses which maintain that the Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful man. Joseph's success was very obvious that even his master saw that the Lord was with him and caused all that he did to prosper. As a result of the Lord's presence with him, he found favour with his master which earned him the post of an overseer in his master's house. As Joseph took over the responsibility of an in-charge, the Lord also blessed his master's house for Joseph's sake. One wonders how Joseph who was to be a servant in Potiphar's house had already become an overseer.

Although the narrative notes that this position of an overseer was conferred on Joseph when he found favour with his master after his master saw that the Lord was with him, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (1871) understand that those slaves who had been war-captives were generally sent to labour in the field, and subjected to hard treatment under the sticks of taskmasters. But those who were bought with money were employed in domestic purposes, were kindly treated, and enjoyed as much liberty as the same class does in modern Egypt. Perhaps, this also suggests why Joseph was not treated as a servant but rather was placed in charge of all that his master had.

Joseph Resists the Temptation from Potiphar's Wife: This title is the major idea expressed in vv. 6c-10. In vs. 6c which understandably starts this structural part, the narrator reveals the physical appearance of Joseph; "Joseph was handsome and good-looking". Possibly, Joseph took after his mother in beauty because similar expressions were used for Rachel in Gen 29:17; "Rachel was graceful and beautiful". According to Clarke (1832), the beauty of Joseph is celebrated over all the East, and the Persian poets vie with each other in descriptions of his comeliness. Mohammed spends the twelfth chapter of the Koran entirely on Joseph, and represents him as a perfect beauty, and the most accomplished of mortals. Following this, the narrator reports that the wife of Joseph's master cast her eyes on him and perhaps noticed his good-looks and resorted to making sexual advances to him. Seebass (2000:45) also understands that "had it not been for his attractiveness, Potiphar's wife might never have noticed this handsome young slave. Therefore it is of great importance for the plot of the story that, following the remark regarding his fine figure and handsome face, it is stated that "his master's wife set her eyes on Joseph" (v. 7a)". This suggests why a part of vs. 6 is discussed alongside other verses which make up this structural part. According to Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (1871), Egyptian women were not kept in the same secluded manner as females are in most Oriental countries now. They were treated in a manner more worthy of a civilized people. In fact, enjoyed as much freedom both at home and abroad as ladies do

in Britain. Hence, Potiphar's wife had constant opportunity of meeting Joseph. But the ancient women of Egypt were very loose in their morals. Intrigues and intemperance were vices very prevalent among the sex, as the monuments too plainly attest. In vv. 8 & 9, Joseph gives two reasons for his non-compliance to the request of his mistress. In the first, he expressed his gratitude to his master who had made him in charge of all that he had. Having sexual intercourse with his master's wife would be a display of his ingratitude and an abuse of the privilege of being favoured by his master. Secondly, he feared God and would not commit such an act of wickedness. Potiphar's wife daily made sexual advances to Joseph but he did not consent.

Joseph Overcomes the Temptation from Potiphar's Wife: It might be argued that the immediate preceding structural part shares the same message with Gen 39:11-12 in that they both relate that Joseph overcame the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife and therefore should be studied together. However, the researchers see vv. 11-12 as a distinct structural part because it gives a detailed presentation of a particular sexual advancement that Joseph had from Potiphar's wife. The Bible recorded that Potiphar's wife again came to Joseph while he was working in his master's house and made sexual advances to him. Perhaps, she was resolute to achieve her goal of having sexual intercourse with Joseph such that she caught him by his garment. Joseph was also determined in his decision of not having sexual intercourse with his master's wife such that he left his garment in her hand and fled.

AN EXAMINATION OF PREMARITAL SEX AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS

Obviously, there are various ways in which contemporary Nigerian youths abuse the act of sex. These include rape, incest, bestiality, prostitution, lesbianism, homosexuality, and masturbation. However, this work focuses on the sexual activity which takes place between unmarried youths of the opposite sex with their approvals. Premarital sex is one of the social ills which is hugely associated with Nigerian youths. This is evident in the great number of youths who have unintended pregnancies and suffer from sexual transmitted infections. More so, many female youths die in the process of terminating an unintended pregnancy while some others drop out of school as a result of the shame associated with pregnancy outside marriage.

It has been established that premarital sex refers to the sexual intercourse done before the act of marriage. Wright (2003:1326) also agrees that premarital sex is "engaging in sexual intercourse prior to marriage". This points to the fact that premarital sex is not restricted to young people alone. It follows that a good number of unmarried adults are also vulnerable to and in fact practice premarital sex. It also implies that married people are never associated with premarital sex. Adewale (2009) rightly asserts that "premarital sex is what youths engage in before marriage while extramarital sex is what married people indulge in". The Bible uses the terms "fornication" and "adultery" to refer to these illicit sexual acts. This work is limited to the act of sexual intercourse among unmarried youths rather than unmarried adults.

The Causes of Premarital Sex among Nigerian Youths

Premarital sex among Nigerian youths has reached an alarming stage. Hence, this section attempts to examine the factors responsible for the high involvement of youths in premarital sex. There are widespread factors responsible for this while there are those that are particular to individuals. McDowell (1996:282) asserts that "the causes of sexual activity among youths are myriad and trying to untangle why a young person becomes sexually active is often like attempting to untie the Gordian knot. However,

while the various causes and influences on sexual activity among youths may be numerous and interrelated, some are more widespread and more significant than others”.

1. Societal Pressure: There is no gain-saying that societal pressure is a factor responsible for youths’ involvement in premarital sex. This refers to social pressure on somebody to adopt a type of attitude in order to be accepted as part of a group. The desire for acceptance and admiration propels many youths to engage in sex. In this analysis, the term ‘Societal Pressure’ is considered more appropriate than ‘Peer Pressure’ because some other members of the society such as parents, friends, lecturers, bosses, and a future partner could also influence a youth to engage in premarital sex. In fact, youths face overwhelming pressure from every direction. However, among all the categories of societal pressure, peer pressure is rated high as a cause of youths’ active involvement in premarital sex. McDowell (1996:284) agrees that “teens who are not sexually active often face overwhelming pressure from friends to ‘join the crowd’”. Uymatiao (2008) also concurs that “Quite a number of youths engage in premarital sex because they want to be accepted by their peers”. McDowell (1987:22) notes that “peer pressure can be either negative or positive. But often today, peer pressure strongly encourages youths to become sexually involved”. A man can mount pressure physically on his partner while a lady can mount pressure on her partner by dressing indecently. Likewise, in places of work, male bosses can mount pressure on their female workers and even threaten to sack them if they do not succumb. Parents can also lead a future daughter in-law into premarital sex by insisting that she must be pregnant before their son marries her.

2. Drug /Substance Abuse and Alcoholism: In this context, Agha (2003:90) defines a drug as “a chemical substance used to deliberately alter mood, perception or consciousness”. Moreover, the *Manual for Training Peer Educators* (2009:37) defines a substance as “any psychoactive material which when consumed affects the way people feel, think, see, taste, smell, hear, play or behave”. Dialoke (2007:149) writes that “drug abuse is the use of illicit drugs or the use of prescription drugs or over-the-counter drugs for purposes other than those for which they are indicated or in a manner or in quantities other than directed”. Some commonly abused psycho-active substances are cannabis, pawpaw leaves, heroin, amphetamines, tobacco, tranquilizers, and cocaine etc. Youths tend to engage in high risk sexual behaviour when they abuse drugs and substances. Female youths who are drug addicts are highly vulnerable to premarital sex because their actions are impeded. According to Melgosa (2000:125), “When drugs and substances are abused, it depresses judgment and makes an addict do things he /she would not ordinarily do if he /she were not under the influence of drugs”. Undoubtedly, when drugs are abused, they impair social and occupational functioning.

3. Electronic Media / Printed Materials: Indisputably, the use of electronic media has contributed to the high rate of premarital sex among Nigerian youths. By and large, secular broadcast media do little to reinforce moral values or demonstrate the consequences of irresponsible moral behaviour. McDowell (1987:21) asserts that “more detailed information about sex is conveyed in movies, music, television, advertising, books, and magazines”. They are aimed at encouraging illicit sexual practices. McDowell (2005) points out that “our music vividly illustrates lewd and sexually suggestive lyrics”. On the internet, youths visit pornographic sites which stimulate their desire for sexual intercourse. Cayona (2012) supports that “easy access to the internet encourages youth to view free porn movies, sex video scandals, nude pictures and any other form of pornography”. More so, when youths communicate through the various sources of mobile social network such as face book, 2go, Twitter, and WhatsApp, they become more

vulnerable to premarital sex. Through these, some female youths engage in romantic discussions with men whom they have not seen physically and even go to the extent of visiting them in their houses or hotel rooms. Similarly, youths have unlimited access to books and magazines which contain distorted messages on sexuality, thereby promoting prohibited sexual behaviours. An example is May's (1981:143) book titled *Sex, Marriage, and Chastity: Reflections of a Catholic Layman, Spouse and Parent*, in which he emphasizes that "the virtue of chastity corresponds to the requirements of holistic love and caring in the area of sex. The chaste person is the one who is able to express his or her sexuality well in reaching out to touch others and be touched by them. The chaste person is the one who knows well the difference between affectionate, non-genital touches and genital/coital touches". The result is that youths are constantly being bombarded with highly charged sexual messages which encourage promiscuity.

4. Family Structure: The family institution is saddled with the responsibility of the moral up-bringing of youths. Therefore, the structure of a family determines to a great extent the character formation of youths. Good family structure enhances the moral development of youths, whereas youths who are brought up in deformed families, more often than not, constitute problems in the society. A single parent family or a polygamous family could be referred to a deformed family. More so, parents who have character deficiencies are also unable to bring up morally sound youths. According to Echeta (2007:188), "The moral code charging children with the respect of parents also challenges parents to maintain strong and good moral disposition". In the same vein, Kuye (2008:21) re-echoes that "when a child has no father to show him or her how to do the right things, he is unable to become who society wishes he should be. When all a child hears are negative things which his father did, it is difficult for that child to grow up to become a responsible citizen". Bad parenting causes a number of social vices which youths participate in. When parents are inattentive to the physical and emotional needs of their children, the result is that these children engage in delinquent behaviours. Onwuka (2009:240) supports that "children who are abandoned by their parents often face significant problems. The child feels an overwhelming sense of rejection which is potentially devastating to self-esteem". This feeling of being alienated from one's parents is a reason many young people are extremely susceptible to sexual involvement. Flaman (1999:3) confirms that "the overwhelming need to be close to another human being, to make emotional contact, to gain a sense of self-worth, to keep from being lonely and to feel cared for make many youths to engage in sex before marriage". Parental affectionate care and supervision of youths should not be substituted for anything. Ekwunife (2000) rightly points out that parental care involves something much more than economic care of children and wards or even adequate funding of tertiary education. In parental care, accent should be placed more on creating a cordial atmosphere at home for interactions; ensuring that parents do not posit those anti-social family behaviours which offend the innocent sensibilities of their children and wards like divorce, infidelity, intermittent quarelling and fighting; over bearingness, tipsiness with its attendant carefree attitudes, over flogging of children, intimidation and so on. In fact, young people often need to be accepted by someone, and if they get more of that acceptance from their peers than they do from their parents, their peers exert more influence over them. McDowell (1987:22) suggests that "teens often respond to peer pressure because they get from their peers what they should be getting at home. They feel an acceptance among their peers".

5. Lack of Sex Education: Awam (2009:119) writes that "sex education in the actual sense should start at childhood when parents teach their children the names of different

parts of the body through “touch and call” method”. But unfortunately, most parents feel shy to mention the names of sexual organs to their children, let alone educating their children about sexuality. Some of them feel it is the responsibility of teachers. In fact, Iffih and Ezeah (2004:85) opine that “forbidding the young ones from having the slightest idea of sex and its related aspects is a part of our culture that is held so tenaciously”. The result is that youths indulge in sexual relationship with the opposite sex without really knowing the consequences. In most cases, the girls are the ones to suffer from the problems resulting in unwanted pregnancies. McDowell (1987:12) discovers that “the more openly parents talked to their teens about their sex-related values and beliefs, the less active their kids were in sexual behaviour. Also, if the teens learned the sexual facts from their parents, they were significantly less likely to be sexually active than those who learned such information from friends”.

6. Indecent Dressing: Diara and Nweze (2011:106) define indecent dressing as “offensive, unacceptable, and inappropriate mode of dressing that often exposes parts of one’s body that should be covered from public view”. Indecent dressing particularly among female youths encourages premarital sex by sensitizing the sexual senses of men who see them. Diara and Nweze (2011) further adumbrate that some ladies who feel that they have a beautiful body, flaunt it: show it off, pose, parade, be photographed and show the world how beautiful they are by being nude. Nowadays, boys are no longer excluded from the issue of indecent dressing, particularly with the new trend of sagging where trousers are worn below the waist and underwears are exposed. Akunyili (2010:7) posits that “when you walk into a typical Nigerian university today, you will be embarrassed by the dressing of the students. Our young guys wear tattered jeans and call it style. Our young female students are either over-dressed or indecently dressed, looking like call girls going for disco parties”. Little wonder, sexual harassment is becoming one of the sad stories in our universities today.

7. Unemployment: Unemployment is considered a cause of premarital sex among Nigerian youths because when youths are not engaged, they may resort to premarital sex as a means of engaging their time and also to get some money from their partners. Most ladies have resorted to prostitution mainly because of unemployment. More so, there are a number of them who engage in premarital sex when it is put as a determinant for being offered a job. Obviously, unemployment is the cause of most societal upheavals or vices.

8. Covetousness: Greed, which is synonymous to covetousness, is defined by Garfingher (1996) as “an extreme or excessive desire for resources, especially for property such as money, real estate, or other symbols of wealth”. It is unfortunate that inordinate acquisition of wealth preoccupies the minds of so many youths that they engage in various social vices such as kidnapping and drug trafficking in order to make quick wealth. Some youths have sacrificed family members and friends at the altar of wealth. Similarly, some female youths want money at all costs and because they think that their parents do not have enough to offer them, they go after men who provide them with money and material possessions at the expense of their bodies. For instance, some female youths have been lured into having regular sexual intercourse with men who have promised to buy them cars and black berry phones. On the other hand, some younger boys have become sex slaves to rich women who promised to sponsor their education or business.

The Effects of Premarital Sex among Nigerian Youths

According to McDowell (1996:282) “Today’s youths are more susceptible to the dangers of illicit sex than previous generations”. Unfortunately, some Nigerian

youths actively engage in premarital sex despite the detrimental consequences associated with it. However, Ukor (1990:39) believes that “Many young adolescents indulge in sexual relationship with the opposite sex without really knowing the implications.” The thrust of this section is to make bare these harmful consequences of premarital sex. According to Akpede (2007), “sex has created and is still creating problems for many of our youths, parents and the entire society, such as unplanned marriage, abortion, premature deaths and high rate of divorce”. Many scholars like Meneses (2008) and Bong (2012) believe that the most prominent effects of premarital sex are sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. The effects are classified as follows:

1. Health Effects: Scholars such as Okoye (2006), Brennen (2011) and Tant (2013) strongly believe that premarital sex poses a lot of health challenges to those who engage in it. Youths who engage in premarital sex run the risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections such as AIDS, Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Genital herpes, Venereal Warts, Trichomoniasis, and Syphilis. More so, a young girl may be faced with some health problems resulting from an unplanned pregnancy because her body may not have developed to carry the pregnancy. Adekunle (2011) concurs that “if a young girl becomes pregnant, she places herself and her unborn child at further risk. Because, the young girl’s body would not have developed to the point of being able to handle child birth safely”.

2. Unplanned Pregnancy: This is often associated with premarital sex. When a pregnancy is an outcome of premarital sex, most youths resort to abortion as a way of concealing their acts in order to avoid embarrassments. The girl feels ashamed to carry a pregnancy that is out of wedlock while the boy responsible for the pregnancy is not mature enough to tackle the responsibilities of fatherhood. According to Dike (2000:92), “this act is most commonly associated with females while males co-pilot the affair”. An unsuccessful abortion could lead to death or the destruction of the womb. It could also lead to childlessness at later years. On the other hand, if the girl decides to carry the pregnancy to term, she may experience difficulty in delivering the baby. Labour may be obstructed and the baby and mother may die. According to Madu (2003:29), “Sexual abuses have given birth to illegal child trafficking. Young girls can now take in, only to deliver and dump the babies at the motherless babies homes in full business accord with the management of such homes. Such babies are later adopted by couples who are childless. On the other hand, unwanted babies can be sold out for ritual murders”.

3. School Drop Out: Unwanted pregnancy often disrupts the education of female youths, thereby increasing the chances of dropping out of school. When a girl becomes pregnant and drops out of school, she may never resume again except in rare cases. Even when the girl decides to remain in school, the challenges of unplanned pregnancy and motherhood may lead to poor academic performance. This has prevented many individuals from achieving their educational goals. Consequently, poverty may set in because job opportunities have decreased as a result of lack of education.

4. Early /Forced Marriage: When premarital sex results in a pregnancy, the parents of those who are involved may propel them to get married even when they are too young for marriage. In most cases, this pressure comes from the parents of the girl because they would not want to harbour their unmarried pregnant daughter in their house. More so, youths involved in premarital sexual relationship may feel compelled to remain in the relationship and get married even though there are doubts of compatibility.

5. Social /Emotional /Psychological Distress: When premarital sex results in an unplanned pregnancy, there is a societal stigma on the girl and her baby, particularly if the pregnancy is not terminated. According to the *Manual for Training Peer Educators*

(2009:67), “stigma can be defined as a social process that marginalizes and labels those who are different”. Premarital sex also has a serious adverse effect on the self-image of the person engaging in it. It damages one’s self-worth. In the words of Brennen (2011), “emotionally crippling guilt seems to be the companion of permissive sex. The hurt, fears, and feelings of guilt associated with premarital sexual involvement are real”.

APPLYING GENESIS 39:1-12 AS A PANACEA TO THE MENACE OF PREMARITAL SEX AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS

This work concerns itself with solving the problem of premarital sex among Nigerian youths. In the preceding sections, the biblical text which serves as a masterpiece for this study had been critically analyzed. So, this section borders on applying the lessons of Genesis 39: 1-12 as a panacea to premarital sex among Nigerian youths. In applying this narrative to curb premarital sex among Nigerian youths, two basic points are raised which would form the foundation for a contextualized application.

The Intrinsic Dispositions of Joseph and Joseph’s Extra Formal Commitment to God

A critical study of Joseph’s attitude in respect to his resistance to have sexual intercourse with Potiphar’s wife reveals his intrinsic dispositions. These dispositions are his self-formed characters which were part of him because of his strong formed character and his devotion/commitment to God. These intrinsic dispositions and his extra formal commitment to God empowered him to overcome the temptation. It could be added that one’s commitment to God could form or enhance one’s character or dispositions. The detailed application of the narrative as presented below

A close look at the character of Joseph reveals that he was neither covetous nor greedy. In fact, Joseph was not mindful of losing something by refusing sexual intercourse with Potiphar’s wife. In vs. 12, “... he left his garment in her hand, and fled and went outside”. Perhaps, submitting to the advances of his master’s wife would have earned him favour from her but he preferred giving up something and maintaining his dignity. As has been highlighted before, a number of youths engage in premarital sex because of their desire for material acquisition. Most of them, particularly those who do not have means of livelihood see this as the only means to measure up or compete favourably with their peers. Unfortunately, even those who are gainfully employed are not satisfied but want to have more at all costs. Of course, in this work, greed was identified as one of the reasons youths engage in premarital sex.

Another is that Joseph was an honest and disciplined young man; full of integrity. Interestingly, Joseph was brought to a strange land; where no one knows him such that if he had submitted himself to the sexual advances of his master’s wife, the shame which would follow would have been bearable. However, he feared God in the midst of a strange people. Many youths have different lifestyles which they exhibit depending on the kind of environment they find themselves. When they find themselves in places, especially in a strange land or where they are not known, they tend to see it as an opportunity to misbehave. Their behaviours automatically change. This is particularly the case when youths leave the houses of their parents or guardians to further their studies or pursue a career. Some youths feel that it is difficult if not impossible to resist a sexual advancement when it is coming from an authority such as one’s boss, lecturer, and teacher etc. Some of them are afraid of disobeying authorities even in such cases of

involvement in a social vice. In Joseph's case, the request also came from an authority, his master's wife, yet he preferred to suffer the outcome of refusal than engage in sexual sin. This also amounts to his life of honesty and integrity.

Joseph was a strong willed young man who was not ready to go against his belief. He had high power of assertiveness and resistiveness. The Bible records that Potiphar's wife spoke to Joseph daily for them to have sexual intercourse but he would not consent to be with her. Some character deficiencies have been hugely associated with youths' involvement in premarital sex. For example, a youth who is neither assertive nor resistive may not be able to cope with the challenges of sexual advancements from the opposite sex. Unfortunately, many youths are not able to look into the eyes of a man and say "No" to prohibited sexual practices. In fact, some female youths immediately follow a man who tells them "I love you" and the next line of action is that they have sexual intercourse with such a person; damning every consequence.

Joseph was not fearful; rather he was bold to resist what he does not want. Possibly, Joseph was aware of the consequences he might face if he rejects the request of Potiphar's wife; yet, he did not consent to have sexual intercourse with his master's wife and this landed him in the prison. Fear can make a youth to submit to the sexual advances of a man. This could be fear of being denied promotion in work place, being sacked from a job, failing an exam, the loss of a likely marriage suitor etc. Of course, some bosses or lecturers threaten to or even deny a staff promotion or unjustly fail a student if they refuse to have sexual intercourse with them.

Interestingly, the Bible recorded that Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. His master's wife noticed his good looks and started making daily proposals to him. He did not submit himself to such wickedness. Some youths justify their involvement in illicit sexual practices on the grounds of their good physical appearance. One of the researchers of this work once counseled a girl who always engaged in premarital sex on the ground that men often approach her because of her beauty and often times, she follows them because she finds it difficult to resist them after they have so much commended her physical attractiveness. More so, he did not allow societal norms and values to make him forget his God or his Christian value of chastity. Joseph said "How then shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God"? In addition, he did not abuse the authority bestowed on him by his master to be in charge of all that he had.

Recommendations

1. Youths should develop the virtue of self control as Joseph had. Without self control, Joseph would have committed sexual intercourse with Potiphar's wife. This all important virtue is highly needed in the Nigerian youths.
2. To be able to exercise self control, one must have to be spiritually transformed through a personal commitment of one's life to Christ who alone gives the Holy Spirit to humanity. Nigerian youths, therefore, should be trained through sermons, teachings and seminars to commit their lives to Christ.
3. Joseph had intrinsic spiritual quality of the fear of God in addition to self control, hence his comment: "how can I commit such a grievous offence and sin against God". Nigerian youths should also be taught that sexual immorality is a sin, not only against humanity but above all, against God.
4. Joseph's attitude is a perfect example of sound sexual morality. Nigerian youths are therefore called upon to emulate Joseph's attitude of fleeing from sex before marriage. Youths should flee from pre-marital sex by all means.

Conclusion

This work studied the biblical narrative about Joseph and Potiphar's wife where Joseph consistently refused to have sexual intercourse with his master's wife. This narrative could be applied as a panacea to the problem of premarital sex among Nigerian youths. Joseph was a slave in Egypt and ordinarily a slave would be expected to do all he is asked to do by his master or mistress. One may also think that Joseph would have more favour from his master's wife if he had submitted to her advances. Perhaps, no one would have known if Joseph had gone to bed with Potiphar's wife. However, Joseph respected God and his master and preferred facing the consequences of being honest rather than sin against God.

The reflections in this work established that youths are the most vulnerable group to premarital sex. Premarital sex is commonly practiced by Nigerian youths as its effects have become almost ubiquitous and conspicuous to all. The devastating effects of premarital sex alarms various sectors of the government as various programs have been put in place to curb this misnomer. The young people of any country are the country's most valuable assets such that if their lives are ruined, then the country's future is devastated. A popular maxim says that "youths are the leaders of tomorrow". Along side the concerted efforts of various governmental and non-governmental establishments to curb this social vice, academic contributions aimed at instructing youths to borrow a leaf from the life of Joseph and doggedly say 'NO' to premarital sex is apt.

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