


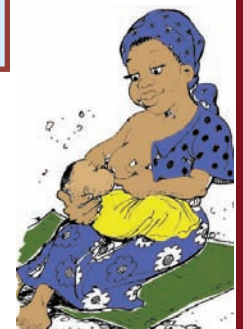
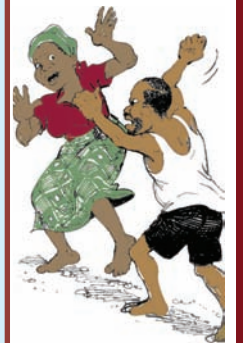


Called to Care

 No. 3

Time to Talk

A guide to family life in the age of AIDS

by James Tengatenga and Anne Bayley





The **CALLED TO CARE** toolkit consists of practical, action-oriented booklets and mini-manuals on issues related to HIV and AIDS, designed for use by church leaders, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The purpose of the materials is to enable pastors, priests, religious sisters and brothers, lay church leaders and their congregations and communities to:

- ❑ Reflect on and understand the spiritual, theological, ethical, health, social and practical implications of the HIV epidemic and the Christian call to respond with compassion.
- ❑ Overcome the stigma, silence, discrimination, denial, fear and inertia that inhibit church and community action to address HIV and AIDS-related issues more effectively.
- ❑ Guide their congregations and communities through a process of learning and change, leading to practical, church-based actions to help individuals, families and communities reduce the spread of HIV and mitigate the impact of the HIV epidemic.

CALLED TO CARE is an initiative of the Strategies for Hope Trust, which produces books and videos that promote effective, community-based strategies of HIV and AIDS care, support and prevention in the developing world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

CALLED TO CARE is implemented through a process of international, ecumenical cooperation involving churches, other faith-based organisations, international church bodies, publishers, distributors and other partners.

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James Tengatenga
and
Anne Bayley**



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Time to Talk

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Right Rev James Tengtenga
Rev Dr Anne Bayley
Glen Williams

Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ARV	Antiretroviral
GNB	Good News Bible
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing

Preface

About the CALLED TO CARE toolkit

In many countries throughout the world, churches and individual Christians are responding to Christ's call to 'love your neighbour as yourself' by undertaking community-based activities to address the massive challenges of HIV and AIDS.

In sub-Saharan Africa, churches have often been in the forefront of efforts to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS. They are demonstrating, in many practical ways, that they feel 'called to care' for those who are infected or affected by the HIV epidemic. They have, for example, pioneered ways of making basic health care available to people living with HIV, and of providing children orphaned by AIDS with education, social support and health care.

Churches have been much less effective, however, in addressing problems such as HIV prevention and HIV-related stigma, shame and discrimination, and cultural and gender issues associated with high-risk sexual behaviour. Denial of the reality of HIV and AIDS within church communities is also widespread. Moreover, although sex is the main means of HIV transmission in most countries, it is rarely discussed in church circles in an open, non-judgemental way.

Yet churches and other faith-based organisations have enormous potential for empowering individuals and communities with the knowledge, attitudes, skills and strategies they need to deal with issues related to sex, gender and AIDS. Moreover, growing numbers of church leaders have become aware of the need for a much more concerted effort to address the issues raised by the AIDS epidemic in a broader, more comprehensive and open manner.

In order to support this effort, the Strategies for Hope Trust is developing the *Called to Care* toolkit. This consists of a set of practical, action-oriented booklets and guides on issues related to HIV and AIDS for church leaders (both clergy and lay people), especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The *Called to Care* materials are designed to enable pastors, priests, religious sisters and brothers, lay church leaders, and their congregations and communities to:

- ❖ Reflect on and understand the spiritual, theological, ethical, health, social and practical

implications of the HIV epidemic and the Christian call to respond with compassion.

- ❖ Overcome the stigma, silence, discrimination, denial, fear and inertia that inhibit church and community action to address AIDS-related issues more effectively.
- ❖ Guide their congregations and communities through a process of learning and change, leading to practical, church-based actions to help individuals, families and communities reduce the spread of HIV and mitigate the impact of the AIDS epidemic.

The *Called to Care* toolkit will consist of several printed materials of various shapes and sizes, for use with church groups and communities at different levels of awareness and experience in relation to the HIV epidemic. This book, No. 3 in the toolkit, is a guide to help church congregations and groups plan and carry out HIV and AIDS-related activities.

Other *Called to Care* 'tools' will be developed in the course of the period 2006-2008. These will be on topics such as stigma and discrimination, pastoral care of people living with HIV and AIDS, HIV prevention strategies, living positively with HIV and AIDS, and nutrition and food security for people living with HIV.

The *Called to Care* project is being implemented through a process of international, ecumenical collaboration between churches, faith-based organisations, international church organisations and networks, publishers, distributors and other partners.

We invite you to participate in *Called to Care*, not only by using the contents of the toolkit in your congregation or community, but also by writing to us about your experiences, which we would be pleased to post on the Strategies for Hope website: www.stratshope.org.

Yours in faith and solidarity,

Glen Williams
Series Editor
Strategies for Hope Trust



Foreword

by the Right Reverend James Tengtenga

Is sex the only reason that people get married? Sometimes it seems that way. Many women, however, admit that they regard sex simply as a duty to their husbands, who are usually unaware of this fact. This was one of the main issues discussed in the Family Life workshops which we began in the Anglican Diocese of Southern Malawi in 2002.

HIV and AIDS have a lot to do with sex, both within and outside of marriage. In sub-Saharan Africa, the main way in which HIV spreads is through sex between men and women. In our region the most likely place for a woman to contract HIV is in her marriage. Promiscuity also plays a role in the spread of HIV, and husband and wife relationships have a lot to do with promiscuity. Poor communication and misunderstandings between husbands and wives can lead to one or both partners seeking sex outside of marriage.

Our societies are changing rapidly. Traditional coping and support mechanisms are either spurned or rejected, leaving people in a malaise. The institution of the family is under siege, not least because of the impact of AIDS on parents and other family members. Husbands and wives are left wondering who they can turn to for advice or support about intimate issues such as sex.

Children and young people find themselves without mentoring in the 'facts of life' and growth. Outside observers tend to blame African parents for not talking to their children about sex. Yet sex education has never been the responsibility of parents in African society. Traditionally, this was the role of aunts, uncles and other initiators into the 'rites of passage'. This tradition has largely broken down under the impact of modernisation and urbanisation, but it has not yet been effectively replaced. As parents, therefore, we have no alternative but to break the taboo about discussing sex with our children.

In the fight against AIDS, one can never overestimate the importance of stable and functional families. Our Family Life workshops in Southern Malawi were designed to help couples to talk openly with one another about issues related to sex, culture and the wife-husband relationship. We have found that, once the taboo about discussing these issues is broken, couples experience a sense of liberation. They become free to discuss topics which previously they would never have mentioned.

We need to get to the point where everyone - husbands and wives, parents and children - can talk about AIDS and its causes. This handbook, *Time to Talk*, brings together the information and exercises which we in Southern Malawi have used to help reach this goal. We offer them to others in the hope that they too might find them useful. The Lord God said: "*See, I am making all things new*" (Revelation 21:5, NRSV).

Right Rev James Tengtenga
Anglican Diocese of Southern Malawi
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Introduction

Once, during a family life workshop in Malawi, we asked a group of men and women church leaders: "Do we thank God for this joyful gift of sex between husband and wife?". Embarrassed silence! No-one dared to say either "Yes" or "No". At another workshop we asked: "Is sex bad?". "No, not exactly bad," some people replied, "but we just don't talk about it." At another workshop a priest said to us: "We have no place where we can talk about sex."

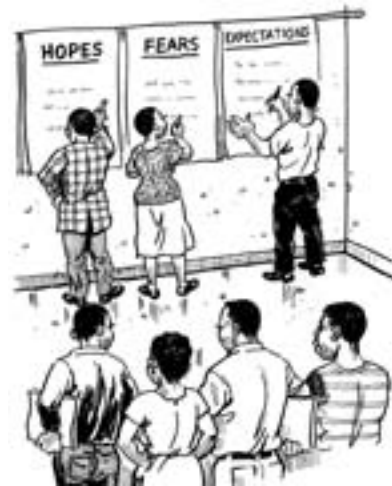
Yet silence about sex is harmful. Silence stops people from examining and changing attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that can spread HIV infection and lead to AIDS. In God's presence, however, we can talk about **every** aspect of human life, including sex. God intends us to enjoy sex and family life to the full. "*I have come,*" said Jesus, "*in order that you might have life - life in all its fullness.*" (📖 John 10:10, GNB) We believe that now, in the era of AIDS, it is time for us to talk more openly about sex in marriage and family life.



This book aims to help church congregations and groups to talk about sex as a good gift from God, not just as a means of transmitting HIV. It is intended for use with church groups by pastors, deacons and religious Sisters, as

well as catechists, lay preachers, leaders of Christian men's and women's organisations, and other lay church leaders. **Part One** is designed to help these church leaders prepare themselves to run a family life workshop in their congregation, parish or community.

Part Two presents group activities - role plays, games, quizzes, discussions, Bible studies and other 'doing-it-together'



exercises. These are all designed to help men and women examine attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that can spread HIV and, if necessary, make changes in their own lives and within their families. The activities are set out as a plan for a three-day workshop for women and men. In fact this is how we developed and used these activities at workshops in Malawi and Zambia.

We recognise, however, that many congregations might find it difficult to organise a three-day workshop. In that case, we suggest that Part Two can be split into three one-day meetings, on alternate Saturdays. Or it can be used as several three or four-hour meetings, over a period of about two months.



TIME TO TALK



Part One

Family life, HIV and the church

1. Family life and discipleship: “glorify God in your body”

Christians are disciples of Jesus Christ in every part of their lives. But do we allow God to challenge and shape every aspect of our family and sexual lives? As Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth: *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.”*

(📖 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, NRSV.)

Sex has many meanings. It is more than simply the way we make babies, find pleasure, or prove ourselves as men or women. We learn some ‘meanings’ of sex from our particular culture, which tells us that a man or a woman should think, feel or act in certain ways. Most people never question these ‘instructions’ from their culture. But today we need to do so, because some attitudes and beliefs inherited from traditional cultures contribute to the spread of HIV.

Africans know that good sexual life is important. There are customs and taboos that say when sexual relations between husband and wife are allowed, and when they are forbidden - for example, after childbirth, during breastfeeding, during menstruation, or when there is a death in the village. But these customs and taboos affect men and women unequally. Women generally don’t expect to have sexual relations with their husband at forbidden times. Yet many men do expect - or are allowed - to have girlfriends during these times - and perhaps at other times as well. Is this safe in the age of AIDS?

In all cultures and countries of the world, ordinary people, talking together and asking questions, can find new ways of thinking about sex. Every church congregation can - and should - join in. Indeed, in family life workshops in Malawi, Zambia and Kenya, Christian couples have found that talking openly about sex is not only a liberating experience, but it actually improves their marriages.



In most African societies, sexual relations between man and wife are forbidden during breastfeeding.



2. Why do married people seek sex outside marriage?

Clearly, many married people have sex outside marriage - usually without a condom, despite the risks in this time of AIDS. Why is this so? Here are some reasons that people have mentioned during family life workshops:

- variety - especially if sex in marriage is not satisfying
- loneliness - absence from home for work or study
- excitement - either partner can initiate sex and both can talk about it
- status - men with many partners gain importance
- poverty - women seeking money for personal or family needs
- quarrels - when one or both partners feels hurt, angry or resentful
- an unhappy marriage - when one or both partners looks for comfort, sympathy or sexual pleasure elsewhere.

Some cultures have proverbs such as: "A man is like an axe. He only becomes sharp after chopping down many trees." "A man is like a bee. For a bee to make good honey, it must suck from many flowers." What do these proverbs (and others like them) tell us about some traditional attitudes towards sex as far as men and women are concerned? Do we all share these attitudes?

Many women and men think and feel differently about friendship in marriage. Many men think women are inferiors, not equals. They cannot be friends: the wife must simply show respect to her husband. A Malawian woman at one workshop remarked sadly: "The friendship of courtship stops at marriage."

Men may talk or act tough, yet their self-esteem is often low. Men generally fear

rejection by their wives, but most cannot admit to this fear. Women also have poor self-esteem because husbands rarely praise them, for example, for their appearance, for their work at home, or for looking after the children. Unspoken fears often cause women and men to misunderstand each other.

Women and men don't know enough about one another's bodies, because 'culture' doesn't allow talk about what pleases the other during sex. Women and men feel pleasure in different ways. But if each learns from the other, both partners enjoy



"A man is like an axe..."

sex more. God intended sex as a joyful gift. At one family life workshop Fulata Moyo, a Malawian woman theologian, shocked people by saying: "Sex is God's idea, and it's a very good idea!" Dare we believe this?



3. Sexual behaviour-changes that reduce the spread of HIV

Certain changes in sexual behaviour would reduce the spread of HIV in the long term, and would also benefit society in important ways at once. For example:

Behaviour change:		→	Benefits:
1	Sex is delayed until marriage	→	Fewer sexual diseases that may prevent women and men from having children or open the way for HIV
2	Husbands and wives are faithful to each other - always	→	Fewer quarrels, more money, no sexual diseases
3	Sex with children is strictly forbidden and punished as a crime	→	Fewer children die prematurely, suffer injuries, emotional harm or HIV infection
4	Men feel shame, not pride, if they have several sexual partners	→	Communities are more stable and and happier
5	Women don't feel obliged to sell sex to support their families	→	Fewer sexual diseases and less spread of HIV
6	More talk and cooperation between husband and wife	→	Happier marriages and couples can use condoms, especially if one or both is HIV-positive

Are we willing to think and talk about changing behaviour in these ways?



4. Different standards for men and women?

In many countries men are expected to have several sexual partners, but women are expected to sleep only with their husbands. In some parts of the world a woman who takes a partner outside marriage may be divorced, rejected by society or even murdered - but a man who does so is not punished. Is this **double standard** found in your society? If so, it probably contributes to the spread of HIV.



**Sexual networks:
how HIV spreads
rapidly through a
population.**

People who have many sexual partners are at high risk of infection with HIV. HIV spreads rapidly when 'few partner' people and 'many partner' people meet each other, without knowing it, through **sexual networks** (see diagram). A woman agrees to have sex, for the first time ever - perhaps on her wedding night. She doesn't know her husband might have slept with five or six other women, and that one could have infected him with HIV.

A truck driver buys sex from a woman at a border post, after a few beers. He forgets that hundreds of other men could have done the same thing with the same woman. If only one of those men had HIV, this woman could be infected with HIV, and can now pass HIV on to him. What do you think about the risks of sharing a sexual partner with many other people?



5. Sex is a way of ‘talking’ - but what do we say to one another?

‘Talk’ is a mixture of words and body language, which do not always give the same message. Some men say: “I paid for you, I can do what I like.” Others say: “I love you - let’s please each other.” Some women say: “I can never forgive my husband for being unfaithful.” Others say: “Let’s forgive each other and start again.”

Do men and women talk to each other before or after sex? Should they? We suggest the answer is ‘yes’ - to agree to the act, or afterwards to check that it has been ‘good’ for both!

Do women and men feel differently about sex after a quarrel? The answer may be ‘yes’ - women seem to take longer than men to calm down after a quarrel. Men sometimes say, “Women don’t really mean what they say”. Is this true? Do men and women sometimes fail to say clearly what they mean?

Men and women often misunderstand one another. This failure in communication is partly because men and women have different ways of expressing themselves. When a couple don’t understand each other, the woman might say: “Stop - I said ‘no’ because I really mean ‘no’.” A man might say: “I see you’re upset but I don’t understand why. Can you please explain your feelings to me?” How often do people respond to misunderstandings in this way?

Should men and women talk to each other before and after sex?





6. Lies, selfishness and power

In some countries many people believe that sex with a virgin or a child cures AIDS. This is a lie! Stories that men or women become paralysed or feel pain if they don't play sex are also lies. Nobody ever died because they didn't have sex. On the other hand, many people have died because they had unsafe sex - either willingly or against their will, either within or outside marriage.

It is always wrong to force sex upon another person who doesn't want it, even within marriage. It is an abuse of power when a teacher seduces a pupil, or a policeman seduces a woman who is in police custody. Rape and sex acts with children are criminal abuses of power. Does your culture allow sexual relations between relatives, even if a young person doesn't consent, or is less than 16 years old? Is this fair to children?

Forcing sex on children may lead to serious injury, even death, and often causes infections, including HIV. Even if physical injuries heal, damage to feelings and self-respect usually remains for life.

Church and traditional leaders should teach that sex should happen only between:

- ◆ unrelated adults
- ◆ when both persons agree to sexual relations, and
- ◆ they are married to each other.



It is an abuse of power when a teacher seduces a pupil.



7. What - and how - shall we teach our children about family life?

In the past, parents never spoke to their own children about sex, but others (usually older relatives) did. In modern times, traditional teaching may not be available or may not be sufficiently well informed. Today's girls should learn to avoid early sex, not how to attract boys. Boys should learn to respect girls' right to say 'no' to sex. All young people need to know that:

- ▣ their bodies mature normally **without** having sex
- ▣ saying 'no' now makes future marriages happier
- ▣ anyone can learn to control strong sexual feelings.


Who should teach youngsters, and at what age? Some churches forbid traditional initiation ceremonies, but offer nothing in their place at puberty. What message does this send about churches' views on sex and

marriage? Do congregations have role models and trained advisors for young women and - just as important - for young men too? How should such Christian advisors be chosen and trained?

Should church and community leaders look again at traditional cultural practices (for example, certain dances) that can lead to sexual excitement, and make men and women want to play sex? Are these practices wise in the time of AIDS?

8. Faithfulness and fulfilment for married couples

Sex should please both partners, renew their energy for living, and strengthen the bond between them. Do you think that the following conditions would help Christian couples to enjoy sex more?

- ◆ complete faithfulness to each other - 'There is no-one else!'
- ◆ consent and courtesy - both want sex: each person learns how to please the other, so that both are equally aroused
- ◆ commitment - neither partner feels hurt if the other wants to 'rest' from sex. *"Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time."*
( 1 Corinthians 7:5, NRSV)
- ◆ calm - no-one is angry, both partners say 'sorry' after a quarrel (and really mean what they say)

- ◆ conversation - partners can talk about feelings, likes and dislikes (including about what pleases them during sexual relations).

Marriage needs open communication between husband and wife. At one workshop we wrote on a blackboard: "Talk, talk, listen, listen; talk, listen, listen, talk" and so on. Talking and listening are both necessary - also a willingness to hear unwelcome truths. As someone remarked at another workshop, the best sexual organ lies between the ears, i.e. in the mind!



“A person is a person through other people” said Archbishop Desmond Tutu, quoting a familiar proverb. This is so in marriage as well as in communities. But really growing together takes a long time. Everyone makes mistakes and has to recover from them. Only a life-long promise to be faithful - always - gives time for this slow growth.

When Peter asked Jesus: *“Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?”* Jesus replied: *“No, not seven times, but seventy times seven.”* (📖 Matthew 18:21-22, GNB.) The wisdom of Jesus applies to husbands and wives, too. How can we show forgiveness to one another?

9. “So God created human beings, making them to be like himself.” (Genesis 1:27, GNB)

God has given a body to everything that lives. We meet one other through our bodies. We also meet God in and through our bodies. Genesis 2 describes how God gave Adam and Eve to each other for joy and companionship. A man *“leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one”* (📖 Genesis 2:24, GNB). This means that the marriage bond is more important than relationships to parents. If culture disagrees, should we follow ‘our’ culture or God’s culture? Jesus confirmed that the marriage bond is permanent: *“They are no longer two, but one. Man must not separate, then, what God has joined together.”* (📖 Matthew 19:6, GNB.)

Can couples in your society be naked, and not feel ashamed of nakedness (Genesis 2:25) when they ‘become one’? Nakedness is not only a matter of taking off clothes, but includes thoughts and feelings too. Married people shouldn’t keep parts of life secret from each other, not money or failures, friendships or dreams. In the marriage service each partner says: *“All that I am I give to you, all that I have I share with you.”*

Genesis (1:1-28) tells us that God made people in God’s own image, to share God’s joy. *“So God created ... them male and*

female.” (📖 Genesis 1:27, GNB.) *“God looked at everything that he had made, and he was very pleased.”* (📖 Genesis 1:31, GNB.)

‘Everything’ includes sexual organs and desires. Women and men were **both** made in the image of God. Neither sex is more important than the other; both are created to please God. Every man is born from a woman, and every woman has a father. So Christian marriage is between two **equal** human beings, where each partner shows love and respect for the other.



10. Protection and sharing

Paul wrote to the Christians living in Corinth: *“Not everything is good for you ... I am not going to let anything make me its slave.”* (📖 1 Corinthians 6:12, GNB.) Asking ‘what is good?’ enables us to think clearly about protection against HIV, for example, by using condoms. Using a condom (whether within or outside marriage) requires talk between partners. This gives space to think, and time to move towards better relationships.

In marriage, if one partner is infected with HIV, the other partner must stay uninfected to care for their children. If sex is forbidden, however, the marriage may break; this would harm the whole family. To protect the uninfected partner, the couple should use a new condom every time they have sex. The condom is used to prevent death, not to prevent new life. Condoms are also important if both partners are infected with HIV. If they exchange sexual fluids, each gives the other more HIV of a slightly different kind, so increasing the amount of HIV in the body. This weakens the body’s defence system, leading to infections and later AIDS and death.

When we share our lives with marriage partners more fully, we experience God’s love through each other. We need each other, but we easily hurt each other, especially if men and women do not know enough about the other sex. It is often easier for couples to talk about relationships in discussions with other husbands and wives. Many men and women find a ‘family life’ workshop an enjoyable way of learning more about one another, and more about sharing God’s own life. This is what God desires for us. *“Those who love me will keep my word and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”* (📖 John 14:23, NRSV.)



“Since both of us have the virus, it would be wise to use a condom.”