

HIV/AIDS and Multiple Sexual Partners: An Examination of Psalms 38 & 51 and their Applications to the Christian Community in Ilorin, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

HIV/AIDS scourge is a global problem that spares no age group, race or socio-economic status. HIV/AIDS is particularly worse in Africa where 70% of the world HIV/AIDS cases are recorded. The current challenges to effective control of HIV/AIDS require new prevention strategies, one of which is the discouragement of multiple sexual practices. Thus, the thrust of this paper is HIV/AIDS and multiple sexual partners with reference to the consequences of David's sexual promiscuity as depicted in Psalms 38 and 51. A multiple historical-exegetical-empirical method is adopted. It is discovered that David's involvement in multiple sexual practices had negative spiritual, physical and emotional effects on his life; multiple sexual practice is a sin; it has a very high risk of HIV/AIDS; and that one important way of fighting HIV/AIDS to a halt is to discourage multiple sexual practices. As David prayed and received forgiveness from God, so also there is hope for those that have been affected by the deadly disease. Therefore, Christians must shun lust and stop behaviours that tend to promote multiple sexual practices. Every married Christian must follow God's instruction for life by being faithful to his or her spouse.

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Introduction

The fact that Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) is transmitted primarily through sexual intercourse in the whole world and especially in Africa must be seriously considered as we seek for solution to the spread of the deadly disease. Unfortunately, a significantly high number of people, young and old, married and unmarried, are still engaged in multiple sexual practices. Obviously, this act contributes significantly to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Therefore, the thrust of this paper is HIV/AIDS and multiple sexual partners with reference to the consequences of sexual promiscuity depicted in Psalms 38 and 51. In other words, the paper examines multiple sexual practices and tries to discourage it in an attempt to curtail the spread of the deadly disease. The paper proposes a preventive solution to the problem of HIV/AIDS scourge in the world in general and Africa in particular.

A multiple historical-exegetical-empirical method is adopted. The paper is historical as several literatures on HIV/AIDS and Psalms 38 and 51 are examined. It is also exegetical as key words and phrases in Psalms 38 and 51 are studied. This is corroborated with the empirical method whereby a questionnaire is administered with a view of understanding the extent of contemporary knowledge of the subject.

General Overview of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is an attack on human life. It has become a global crisis sparing no age group, race, gender or socio-economic status. The spread of this deadly disease is the most serious health problem facing our global community. HIV/AIDS presents an unprecedented challenge. It has been rightly noted that:

The spread of HIV/AIDS is the most serious health problem facing our global community. Despite the effectiveness of new medications, rates of new HIV infections continue to rise, and many strains of the virus are resistant to available medications. Now more than ever, there is a need for the whole community to cooperate in developing strategies both to halt the spread of HIV and to make effective treatments

available to those living with HIV, especially in populations with limited access to health care.²

The statistical data shows that more than 35 million people worldwide are living with HIV out of which 3.2 million are under the age of 15. In 2013, an estimated 2.1 million people were newly infected with HIV and 240,000 were under the age of 15. It was reported that every day, more than 5700 people contracted HIV, nearly 240 every hour. In addition, it was said that 1.5 million people died from AIDS in 2013.³

The scourge of HIV/AIDS is particularly felt in Africa where more than two-third, about 70% of all the people living with HIV live in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was reported that an estimated 1.5 million people in the region became newly infected in 2013. It was also reported that an estimated 1.1 million adults and children died of AIDS, accounting for 73% of the world's AIDS deaths in 2013.⁴

The Punch editorial of 15th June, 2014 was centred on Nigeria's high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate. The write-up started with the glooming picture by the experts that the HIV situation in Nigeria has worsened because the country is no longer taking reasonable precautions to protect the vulnerable members of the society against the spread of the disease.⁵

Further highlights of this dreaded disease in the Punch editorial include:

- That the people living with HIV AIDS in Nigeria has increased by almost 500,000 in three years, while the number of AIDS related deaths also witnessed a marginal rise to 217,148 within the same period.

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See the introductory page of the Programme of Events for HIV/AIDS Workshop for Medical and Religious Professionals at the University of Chicago. Saturday (February 5, 2005). It was a partnership between the Zygon Centre for Religion and Science, Midwest AIDS Training and Educational Centre, The Lutheran School of Theology of Chicago.

³ (amFAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research).

⁴ (amFAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research).

⁵ This was the view of the experts who met at the American conference on the treatment of HIV held in Denver, Colorado in the USA cf. editor@punchng.com.

- That a United Nation report described Nigeria as the country with the highest number of children living with the virus in the world-nearly 60,000 in 2012.
- That WHO figures put the number of people living with HIV/AIDS at between 32-38 million infected persons. It is even believed that between 50,000 and 100,000 children are born annually with HIV in Nigeria.
- That the UN had warned that Nigeria would not reach the Millennium Development Goal target of eliminating HIV in children and keeping their mothers safe by 2015 because the government is not serious in curbing HIV in children.⁶

The fact that young people, mostly girls, are affected has been established: People between ages 15 and 24 years make up about one-quarter of all those infected worldwide. The number is on the increase daily. Each day, nearly 6,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 become infected with HIV. Young people are at centre of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. Today's youth have inherited a lethal legacy that is killing them and their friends, their brothers and sisters, parents, teachers and role models. An estimated 11.8 million young people aged 15 to 24 are living with HIV/AIDS, yet only a fraction of them know they are infected⁷

Speaking further on the alarming rate of the HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, it has been noted that:

Since 1986 when the first case of AIDS was reported in Nigeria, there has been a rapid increase in HIV sero-positivity from 1.8% in 1991 to 4.5% in 1996 and 5.4% in 1999 to 5.8% in 2001. The 5.0% of 2003 does not represent a real drop, since there are reports of explosive epidemics in several parts of the country. HIV prevalence by age is reported to be the highest among the 20-24 year-olds (5.6%), followed by 25-29 year-olds (5.4%) and 15-24 year-olds (5.2%)⁸

Furthermore, the technical report of the 2005 National HIV sero-prevalence sentinel survey shows that HIV is prevalent in every state in Nigeria.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See the draft copy of "University of Ilorin Policy of HIV/AIDS", 1.

⁸ See the draft copy of "University of Ilorin Policy of HIV/AIDS", 1

This prevalence ranges from 10% in Benue State, 8% in Akwa Ibom State, 6.7% in Nasarawa State to 1.6% in Ekiti State, being the lowest. Only Osun, Oyo, Ekiti and Jigawa States have prevalence rates not exceeding 2% while seven states recorded 5%. Speaking on the impact of HIV/AIDS on children, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the former president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria noted that not less than 13 million children had lost one or both parents to the dreadful disease in Africa and that the administration is working hard to tackle the problem.⁹

HIV/AIDS is not only a medical issue but an issue that affects every sphere of the life of man and of the society. Writing on the global nature of this epidemic, Eunice Sena Akua Kpikpi notes:

It is also a religious and economic issue. In fact, it affects every sphere of our lives. It is a global issue which needs to be tackled seriously by all. It is catastrophic.¹⁰

The cause of HIV/AIDS is associated with a number of factors of which sexual contact stands at the top. In other words, indiscriminate sexual intercourse especially with an infected person exposes one to the infection.

Over 80% cases of HIV infection occur this way.¹² Most sexual intercourse in Nigeria and Africa is heterosexual, that is, sex between a man and a woman. Hence, one can be infected with HIV virus by one's spouse who has multiple sexual partners. The cases of homosexuality, are relatively low in Africa compared to Western Europe and North America. It has been established that a single sexual encounter with an infected person is

⁹ Federal Ministry of Health, National HIV Sero-Prevalence Sentinel Survey, 2005, 23. cf. Lateef F. Oladimeji. "Health and Healing in Islam: A Case Study of HIV/AIDS Prevention in Nigeria". Being a paper presented at the Third African Association for the Religions at the University of Botswana, Gaborone, 8th -13th July 2007.

¹⁰ See *Saturday Punch* (May 27, 2006), 14.

¹¹ Eunice Sena Akua Kpikpi "HIV/AIDS Pandemic from Condemnation to compassion" *In people of Faith and the challenges of HIV/AIDS*. Edited by Mercy Oduoye and Elizabeth Amoah (Ibadan: Sefer Books, 2004), 78.

¹² C. Jean Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*, (Bukuru: Africa Christian Textbooks, 3003), 40.

¹³ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*, 40.

sufficient for the transmission of HIV. Unfortunately, an infected person with HIV may not necessarily show any sign as the effects of infection are not immediately known. The initial signs of loss of weight, fever, cough, diarrhoea and weakness of the body are not enough to confirm that a person has been infected. The only means of ascertaining the status of any person is by medical test which may have to be repeated at an interval of about three months for confirmation.¹⁴

Also, HIV spreads from mother to baby. This accounts for about 10% of total HIV infections, that is, about 3 out of every 10 children born to infected mothers will become infected with HIV.¹⁵ The virus passes from the mother to the child in three different ways namely, in the womb before delivery;¹⁶ during the birth process;¹⁷ and during breast-feeding. However, the risk is minimized if the mother knows her HIV status early enough and takes advantage of medical services that are available to prevent the mother-to-child transmission of the virus.

Blood transfusion is another way by which HIV is passed by an infected person. This accounts for about 5%-7% of all HIV infections in Africa.¹⁸ In other words, if a person receives a transfusion of HIV-infected blood, he is sure to develop the infection. Unfortunately, it has been reported that:

Many Nigerian hospitals and clinics still do not have kits or supplies for testing blood for HIV. They do not have the money to buy the testing kits or maybe they do not have a trained technician to perform the tests.¹⁹

¹⁴ J. Chin, "Public Health Surveillance of HIV and AIDS Infection." *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 68/5 (1990); 529-536.

¹⁵ Lateef F. Oladimeji, "Health and Healing in Islam: A Case Study of HIV/AIDS Prevention in Nigeria." 11.

¹⁶ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*, 41.

¹⁷ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*, 41 – 42.

¹⁸ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*, 44.

¹⁹ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*.

Furthermore, speaking on the unsafe blood transfusion, Chinua Akukwe says:

Nigeria has one of the highest rates of unsafe blood transfusions in the world, at 14 percent. The HIV virus is easily transferred during blood transfusions. In some hospitals in Nigeria, 60 percent of blood transfusions may not undergo internationally acceptable screenings.²⁰

Another way of having contact with the blood of another person is by the use of unsterilized needles, syringes, and sharp objects like knives and razor blades which have been used by an infected person. Infection by non-sterile blades, sharp instruments and needles account for about 5% of the total of HIV infections.

Multiple Sexual Partners: A high risk for the spread of HIV/AIDS

Having established the fact that about 80% of HIV/AIDS cases occur through sexual contact, our focus at this point is to examine multiple sexual partners as a high risk factor for the spread of the killer disease. Multiple sexual partners is closely connected with polygamy or polyandry in the sense that the two deal with having more than one wife or husband at the same time. The words, 'multiple sexual partners' are not used in the Old Testament (OT) but it was a common practice. The word that connotes multiple sexual partners in the OT, apart from polygamy is פְּגֻלָּה²² or שְׂגֵיפָה²² which is a feminine noun that means concubine. A concubine is a slave girl who belonged to a Hebrew family and bore children. Concubines were acquired by purchase from poor Hebrew families, or captured in war, or even taken in

²⁰ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*.

²¹ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*.

²² Francis Brown; S.R. Driver & Charles A. Briggs. *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with An Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 811. (Henceforth referred to as BDB). Cf. Victor P. Hamilton, שְׂגֵיפָה in *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament* Edited by R. Laird Harris, et al. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), II: 724.

payment of debts. A girl or woman in this classification achieved a certain status if she had sons (Gen 21:10; 22:24; 30:3; 31:33; Exod 23:12; 21:7, 10).²³

Speaking further on the role and position of concubines within the family setting, Baab says:

Her son might become a co-heir, her name was remembered because of her offspring; a barren wife might have a son through her and she had the right to food, clothing and sexual intercourse.²⁴

Incidentally, several men in the OT were either polygamists or men that had concubines which invariably exposed them to the act of multiple sexual practices. Some of the men who had concubines include Abraham whom Sarai, his wife, gave her Egyptian maidservant (Hagar) as a concubine. He slept with her and she conceived (Gen 16: 3-4). Nahor had Reumah as his concubine who gave birth to Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah (Gen 22:23-24). Eliphaz, the son of Esau, had a concubine named Timna who gave birth to Amalek (Gen 36:12). Even a Levite is said to have a concubine (Judg 19:1). Caleb had two concubines - Ephah and Maacah, and each one of them had children for him (1 Chro 2:46-48). Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah was the concubine of Saul (2 Sam 3:7). David, after he had left Hebron, took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:13). Solomon is said to have seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines (1 Kgs 11: 3). Rehoboam is said to have eighteen wives and sixty concubines (2 Chro 11:21). Besides, there are several polygamists in the Old Testament. Some of them include: Lamech (Gen 4:19-23), Esau (Gen 26:24; 28:9), Gideon (Jud 8:30), Elkanah (1 Sam 1:2), Ashur (1 Chro 4:5), Abijah (2 Chro 13:21), Jehoram (2 Chro 21:14), Joash (2 Chro 21:14), Ahab (2 Kgs 24:15) and Belshazzar (Dan 5:2).

Apart from the examples of several polygamous families in the OT, Moses, the lawgiver had two wives (Exod 2:21; Num 12:1). This means that polygamy or having a concubine was allowed in the Mosaic law. Exodus 21: 10, while making reference to a man who desires to have another wife says:

²³ O. J. Baab, "Concubine" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* Edited by G. A. Buttrick et al (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:666.

²⁴ Baab, "Concubine" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1:666.

If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first of her food, clothing and marital rights.

Furthermore, the Mosaic Law did not forbid a man to have sex with a virgin. All that is required of such a man is to pay a fine and then marry the woman (Exod 22:16; Deut 22:16).²⁵

There are several reasons for multiple sexual practices in the OT. Barrenness stands out among the reasons as demonstrated in the case of Sarah who initially did not have a child for Abraham. She then advised her husband to take Hagar as his concubine (Gen 16:2-3). Love for a particular woman is another reason for multiple sexual practices in the OT. An example is Jacob who loved Rachael and he decided to serve Laban for seven years. But at the end, he was given Leah whom he did not reject the night he was given. He decided to work for another seven years after which Rachael was given to him (Gen 29: 18, 25, 30). Furthermore, several kings in the OT had many wives and concubines for political reason as exemplified by Solomon, the wealthiest king who had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kgs 11:3). Unfortunately, these women led to his spiritual downfall (1 Kgs 11: 3-5). The Samaritan woman whom Jesus had discussion with in John 4:7-26 is a good example of multiple sexual practices in the New Testament.

In spite of the so-called 'pleasure' which people attached to multiple sexual practices, the act should be discouraged. In other words, even though multiple sexual partners is not presented in the Bible as a great sin, yet the act does not receive the approval of God. Generally, there is a continuous domestic strife when two or three women are involved in sharing a husband both in the OT and in the African society. The Hebrew word for the second wife *אִשָּׁה רִבִּיבָה* literally means 'rival wife' as in 1 Samuel 1:6.²⁶ This means that bitterness and hostility usually exist between polygamous wives.²⁷

²⁵ Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro "Interpreting Old Testament Polygamy through African Eyes" in *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*. Edited by Mercy Amba Oduoye & Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 90.

²⁶ BDB 865.

²⁷ J. I. Packer; Merrill C Tenney; & William White, *Daily Life in Bible Times* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), 14.

Writing on the bad effects of polygamy, O' Donovan notes:

The emotional pain, jealousy and competition among the wives and children of polygamous families clearly demonstrate the fact that this form of marriage is a matter of selfish convenience. Polygamy denies a woman the emotional fulfilment God intended her to have by enjoying the undivided love and attention of her husband.²⁸

Multiple sexual partners should be discouraged because it has a very high risk through which HIV/AIDS can be transmitted.²⁹ It is particularly risky as the men/women involved do not know one another and their HIV status. It has been noted that in several cases, especially in polygamous marriages, the wives do not live in the same house as apartments are rented for each one of them elsewhere by their rich husbands. And because the man does not come visiting all the time, there is a tendency for the women to have other sexual partners.³⁰ This means that the risk of contracting and spreading HIV/AIDS in polygamous marriages is very high. Labeodan presents a good hypothetical scenario as follows:

Mr. Tafa is married to Nonye, Binta and Titi. Titi who is his latest addition is favoured above the other two wives. Nonye and Binta are both neglected sexually and materially. They have to take care of their kids and their personal needs. Nonye told one of her friends that since their husband married his latest wife, he has not been paying any attention to her and Binta. This friend advised her to take a boyfriend. Nonye decided to follow her friends' advice. Unfortunately, the boyfriend she picked was HIV positive. She got infected without knowing. Titi took ill and during this period Mr. Tafa came back to his two senior wives. He got infected by Nonye and he passed it on first to Binta and later to Titi who then passed it on to the child in her womb.³¹

²⁸ Wilbur O'Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective*: (Carlie: Paternoster Press, 1995), 290.

²⁹ Helen Adekunbi Labeodan, "Culture and HIV/AIDS Transmission in Nigeria: A Philosophical Appraisal" in *People of Faith and the Challenges of HIV/AIDS*. Edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye & Elizabeth Amoah (Ibadan: Sefer Books, 2004), 211-12.

³⁰ Labeodan, "Culture and HIV/AIDS Transmission in Nigeria: A Philosophical Appraisal" in *People of Faith and the Challenges of HIV/AIDS*.

³¹ Labeodan, "Culture and HIV/AIDS Transmission in Nigeria: A Philosophical Appraisal" in *People of Faith and the Challenges of HIV/AIDS*, 212-12.

The above scenario clearly illustrates how multiple sexual practices can become a risk factor in HIV/AIDS transmission. For Christians, this risk is clearly expressed in the Bible as the following exegesis will show.

Exegesis of Psalms 38 and 51

David to whom Psalms 38 and 51 are ascribed was the youngest son of Jesse³² (1 Sam 16:10-11), and the great grandson of Ruth and Boaz. He took care of the sheep. He was skilful in music and stringed instruments right from his childhood (1 Sam 16:15-23; 17:15). He is called the author of Psalms (Mark 12:36-37; Rom 4:6-8; 11:9-10). He was a man of deep feelings and of imperial imagination. He organised cultic workshop in Israel (2 Chro 29:30; Ezra 3:10; Neh 12:24). He appointed singers and musicians and assigned them their roles in the worship of God (1 Chro 15:16-24; 16:7, 31). He was enlisted in the service of King Saul and ministered to him whenever he was tormented by evil spirits (1 Sam 16:22-23). David was the greatest of all the kings of Israel as recorded in chapters and books of the Old Testament – from 1 Sam 16, where God chose him to 1 Kings 2:11 where he died.

Psalms 38 and 51 are the third and fourth respectively of the so-called Penitential Psalms. Others are Psalms 6, 32, 102, 130 and 143. Psalm 38 on one hand is a song of sorrow and a prayer which is “evoked by the experience of sickness and the consequent sense of alienation from both God and fellow human beings.”³³ The three dominant themes of this Psalm are “illness, guilt and the hostility of enemies and former friends.” Psalm 51 on the other hand is a powerful prayer of repentance. It demonstrates the essence of true penitence. Derek Kidner notes that the Psalm “comes from David’s blackest moment of self-knowledge, yet it explores not only the depth of his guilt but some of the farthest reaches of salvation.”³⁵

³² The phrase לַדָּוִד (A Psalm of David) in the superscription of the Psalms is very instructive. The Hebrew preposition ל has various meanings such as ‘to’, ‘by’, ‘for’, ‘in honour of’, etc. This explains why seventy three of the one hundred and fifty Psalms are ascribed to David.

³³ Peter C. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, *The Word Biblical Commentary*. (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), 302.

³⁴ A.A. Anderson, Psalms 1-72 *Volume 1, The New Century Bible Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co. 1983), 301.

³⁵ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72: An Introduction and Commentary*. (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1973), 189.

The central focus of the two Psalms (38 & 51) is the degree of physical, spiritual and emotional suffering which David experienced as a result of his involvement in multiple sexual acts/practices. The superscription of Psalm 51 is self explanatory as it gives information on both the authorship and historical context of the Psalm – “For the director of music. A Psalm of David when the Prophet Nathan came to him after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba.”³⁶

David had many wives. They include: Michal (1 Sam 18:27), Abigail (1 Sam 25:42), Ahinoam (1 Sam 25:43), Maacah (2 Sam 3:3; 1 Chro 3:2), Haggith (2 Sam 3:4; 1 Chro 3:3), Abital (2 Sam 3:4; 1 Chro 3:3), Eglah (2 Sam 3:5; 1 Chro 3:3), Bathsheba (2 Sam 11-12; 1 Chro 3:5), other wives and concubines (1 Chro 3:6-9; 14:3-4). The climax of David’s multiple sexual practices is recorded in 2 Sam 11-12, for it was the event that led to the strong rebuke by God through Prophet Nathan. Incidentally, David already had many wives and concubines before Bathsheba but then on that fateful afternoon, his stroll on the roof led him eventually to break half of the Ten Commandments (He killed, committed adultery, stole, bore false witness and coveted).³⁷ David’s multiple sexual practices in general and the adultery with Bathsheba had negative spiritual, physical and emotional effects on him as shown in Psalms 38 and 51.

David’s introductory prayer in Psalm 51:1-2 is very instructive. He appealed to God’s mercy, grace and steadfast love. The Hebrew word רַחֵם which means “to show favour or be gracious” can be used of man or God. In this context, David pleaded to God for his redemption from the sin of adultery which he had committed. The Hebrew masculine noun רַחֲמֵי (goodness or kindness) can be used of man which speaks of the kindness of men towards men, in doing favours and benefits (1 Sam 20:15; 2 Sam 16:17). It can also be used of the loving-kindness of God in condescending to the needs of his creatures. It is specifically used of God in redemption

³⁶ It should be noted that some scholars argue against the Davidic authorship of the Psalm. One of them is E.R. Dalgish. For details, see Anderson, *Psalms 1-72*, 389-390.

³⁷ J. Clinton McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 102.

³⁸ McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 335-336.

(Gen 19:19; 39:21; Exod 15:13; Psa 21:8, etc); in preservation of life from death (Psa 6:5; 86:13; Job 10:12); in quickening of spiritual life (Psa 109:26; 119:76, 88, 124, 149, 159) or even still in redemption from sin as in Psalms 25:7 and 51:3).³⁹

It was on this note that he prayed that God should blot out his transgressions. He recognised that he had sinned against the Lord as indicated in the Hebrew masculine noun חַטָּא (sin) which can mean sin against man (Gen 41:9; Ecc 10:4, etc) or sin against God (Isa 31:7; Hosea 12:9). In this case sin against God is meant and its effects have started to have negative impact upon him.⁴⁰ The gravity of the offence is made clear in Psalm 38 where the Psalmist lamented his suffering for the chastening of his sin. As a result of his sin he lost his health. He was made to bear his guilt which had overwhelmed him (Psa 38:4). He was crushed in body (Psa 38:3) and in spirit. There was no soundness in his flesh (Psa 38:3, 7). The Hebrew word בָּשָׂר is a masculine noun which means flesh. It can be the flesh of animals as in Gen 41:2-19 and Exodus 21:22 or the flesh of men as in Gen 14:19; Exod 4:7; Lev 12:3; Psalm 27:2; 38:4, 8; 79:2, etc.⁴¹ His loins are filled with a loathsome disease. The verb שָׂרַף means “to roast, parch, burn, consume”.⁴² This means that his body is being consumed or roasted with fire (Jer 29:22 & Psa 38:8). Apart from the flesh which has been crushed, his bones were also broken (Psa 51:8). The Hebrew word for bone is עָצָם and it has a number of meanings: it speaks of the bone of a living person (Mic 3:2-3); it means body or bodily frame (Job 2:5; Jer 20:9); it means seat of diseases and pain (Job 30:17, 30; Psa 22:15; 21:11; 102:4, etc); and in the plural form it represents the entire person, that is, one’s whole being (Psa 6:3; 35:10, etc)⁴³

Unfortunately, as his health failed him, (Psa 38:10), his friends avoided him (Psa 38:11) and of course his enemies spoke evil of him (Psa 38:12). David’s acknowledgement and confession of his transgressions provide a permanent solution to his problem (Psa 51:3-4). Even though he waited for

³⁹ McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 338-339.

⁴⁰ McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 307-308.

⁴¹ McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 142.

⁴² McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 885.

⁴³ McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 782-783

for about a year to rationalise his actions but when Prophet Nathan⁴⁴ approached him, he submitted himself to the will of God. Thereafter he offered a prayer of repentance and renewal (Psa 51:7-12) which is centred on God's creation of a new heart in him. The Hebrew verb צָרַף means "to shape, create and fashion". It is always used of divine activities in the following contexts:

- Creation of heaven and earth (Gen 1:1; 2; 3; Isa 45:18)
- Creation of individual man (Mal 2:10)
- Creation of new conditions and circumstances (Isa 45:8)
- Transformation of a clean heart (Psa 51:12) and new heaven and earth (Isa 65:17).⁴⁵

In effect, David affirms that his life has been transformed and that "he has been reborn."⁴⁶ From the passages studied, some effects of sexual promiscuity comparable to the effects of HIV/AIDS today include loss of health, social stigma, feelings of guilt, hopelessness, etc. Obviously, David was aware of the possible consequences of multiple sexual partners, but like many Christians in Ilorin, Nigeria, David ignored his knowledge of the consequences and paid a price. To further draw a connection between the consequences of multiple sexual partners in Bible times and the same behaviour today, a survey was conducted in Ilorin, Nigeria, as shown below.

HIV/AIDS and Multiple Sexual Partners

In an attempt to understand the awareness, causes and possible solution to HIV/AIDS vis-à-vis multiple sexual partners in our contemporary society, a questionnaire was administered on the subject among 300 and 400 level degree students of United Missionary Church of Africa Theological College, Ilorin on the 19th-22nd April 2008. The choice of these classes of seminary students is premised on the fact that several of them are involved in Pastoral work within Ilorin metropolis and that they represent various denominations in the city.

⁴⁴ Allen P. Ross, "Psalms" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* by Dallas Seminary Faculty, Old Testament. Edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985), 832.

⁴⁵ BDB, 135.

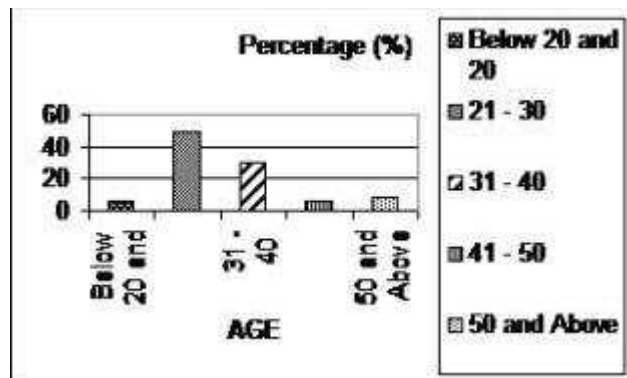
⁴⁶ J. Clinton McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*. 104.

Twelve variables were prepared for the questionnaire. Questions 1-3 deal with demographic information from the respondents like age, sex and marital status. Questions 4-12 deal with issues relating to HIV/AIDS and multiple sexual partners. 120 Questionnaires were administered to 120 students and 97 respondents participated faithfully. The analysis of data was made by using simple percentage and pie chart as stated below:

Question 1: Age

Age	Response	Percentage (%)
Below 20 and 20	6	6.2
21 – 30	48	49.5
31 – 40	29	30
41 – 50	6	6.1
50 and Above	8	8.2

97 100

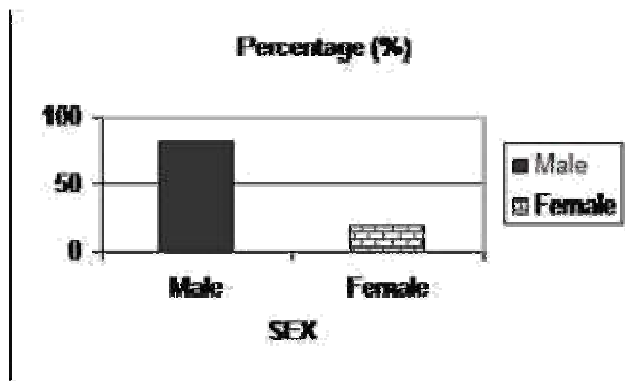


The above table shows that majority of the respondents were adults. The percentage of those whose age is 21 years and above is 93.8%. This indicates that they were matured and experienced and hence, their judgement on the subject can be regarded as valid and reliable.

Question 2: Sex

Sex	Response	Percentage (%)
Male	80	82
Female	17	18

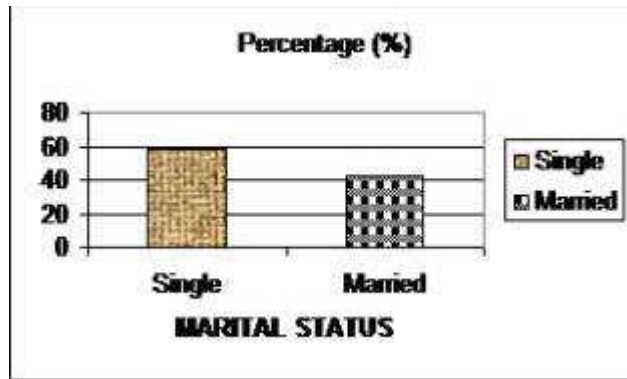
97 100



The analysis shows a significant difference between the male and female respondents, that is, 82% and 18% respectively. The wide difference can be explained on the ground that majority of the seminary students are male.

Question 3: Marital Status

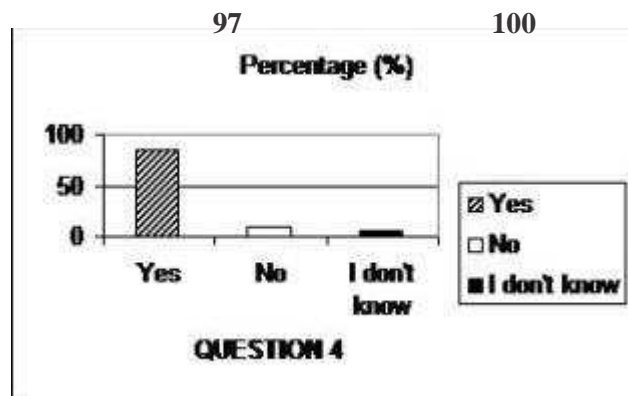
Marital Status	Response	Percentage (%)
Single	56	58
Married	41	42
	97	100



There is no significant difference between the single and the married respondents.

Question 4: Multiple sexual partners means to have more than one sexual partner at a time.

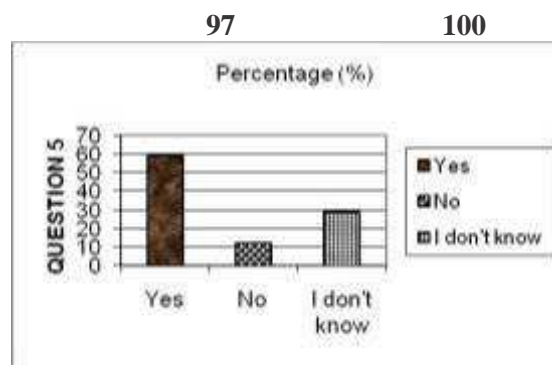
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	82	85
No	9	9
I don't know	6	6



Majority of the respondents, that is, 85% has an understanding of multiple sexual partners.

Question 5: Awareness that some so called Christians in Ilorin metropolis are involved in multiple sexual practices

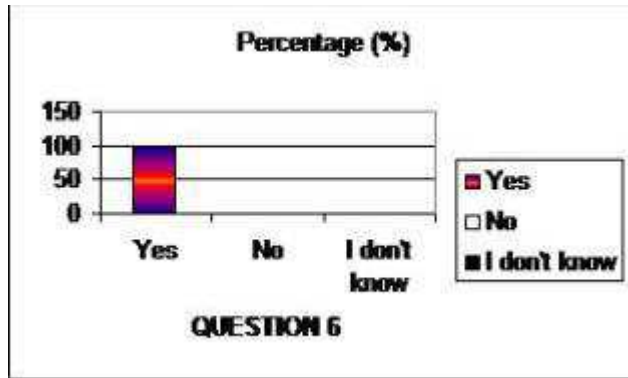
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	57	59
No	12	12
I don't know	28	29



The analysis shows that majority of the respondents are aware of the so-called Christians getting involved in multiple sexual practices. But then a significant percentage of the respondents had no knowledge of the fact that Christians in Ilorin metropolis are involved in multiple sexual practices.

Question 6: Multiple sexual practice is a sin

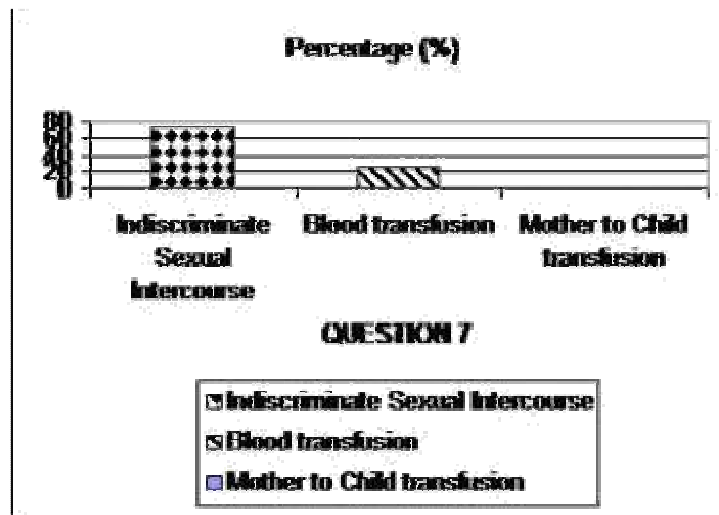
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	97	100
No	0	0
I don't know	0	0
	97	100



The report shows that all the respondents, 100% believe that multiple sexual practice is a sin.

Question 7: The main cause of HIV/AIDS

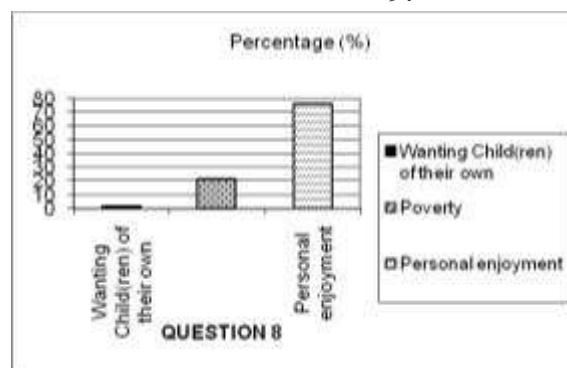
	Response	Percentage (%)
Indiscriminate Sexual Intercourse	71	73
Blood transfusion	25	26
Mother to Child transfusion	1	1
	97	100



The analysis indicates that a very high percentage of the respondents, 73% believe that indiscriminate sexual intercourse is the cause of HIV/AIDS. Also, a significant percentage, 26% believe that HIV/AIDS is caused by blood transfusion.

Question 8: Reason for opting for multiple sexual practices

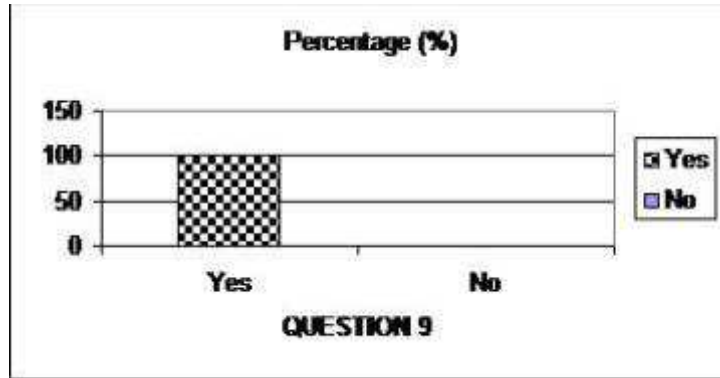
	Response	Percentage (%)
Wanting Child(ren) of their own	2	2
Poverty	21	22
Personal enjoyment	74	76
	97	100



The analysis indicates that majority of the respondents, 76% believe that people get involved in multiple sexual practices for personal enjoyment. Also, a significant percentage, 22% believe that poverty is the reason why people opt for multiple sexual practices.

Question 9: Multiple sexual practice has a risk of HIV/AIDS

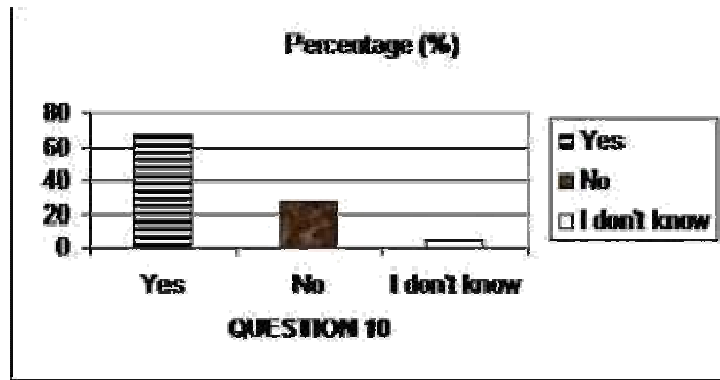
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	97	100
No	0	0
	97	100



The above table shows that all the respondents, 100% believe that multiple sexual practices have a very high risk of HIV/AIDS.

Question 10: Lack of understanding/communication is one major factor responsible for multiple sexual practices among Christian couples.

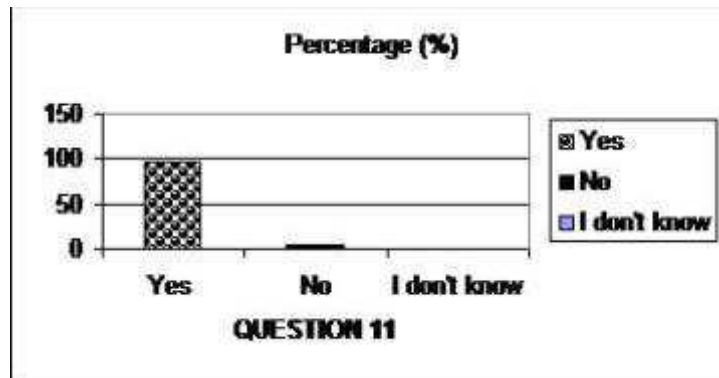
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	67
No	27	28
I don't know	5	5
	97	100



The analysis shows that a very high percentage of the respondents, 67% believe that lack of understanding/ communication is one of the major factors responsible for multiple sexual practices among Christian couples.

Question 11: Multiple sexual practices are a sign of infidelity and carnality

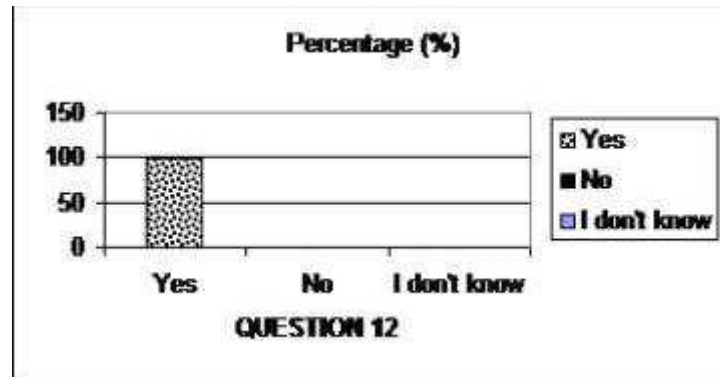
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	93	96
No	4	4
I don't know	0	0
	97	100



The analysis shows that almost all respondents, 93% believe that multiple sexual practice is a sign of infidelity and carnality.

Question 12: One important way of fighting HIV/AIDS is to discourage multiple sexual practices.

	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	96	99
No	1	1
I don't know	0	0
	97	100



The analysis indicates that a very high percentage of the respondents, 99% believe that one important way of fighting HIV/AIDS is to discourage multiple sexual practices.

From the above survey, it is obvious that like David, many Christians in Ilorin, Nigeria are ignoring scriptural warnings against multiple sexual partners and are paying a high price.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that the current challenges to effective control of HIV/AIDS require new prevention strategies, one of which is the discouragement of multiple sexual practices. David's involvement in multiple sexual practices had negative spiritual, physical and emotional effects on his life. Also, the paper has shown the awareness, causes and possible solution to HIV/AIDS vis-à-vis multiple sexual partners in the analysis of the empirical research carried on the subject. Thus in view of the

fact that “Africa hosts the largest number of infected and affected people,” African Christians must take up the challenge of fighting the HIV/AIDS to a halt.

Every married Christian must follow God’s instruction and pattern for life by being faithful to his or her spouse. Christians must shun lust and stop behaviours that tend to promote multiple sexual practices. Restricting sexual intercourse to one faithful partner will certainly reduce drastically the spread of HIV/AIDS which is a sin and a sign of infidelity and carnality. Finally, there is hope for those that have been affected by the deadly disease. David prayed and he received the forgiveness from God on the basis of His steadfast love. Therefore, there should be no discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.

⁴⁷ See Musa Wenkosi Dube, in her forward to HIV and AIDS Curriculum for Theological Institutions in Africa,(MAP International 2003), 4.

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