

AIDS and You, by Dr. Patrick Dixon, Secunderabad, India, Jointly published by Operation Mobilization and Aids Care Education and Training (ACET) International Alliance in partnership with Kingsway, 2002. (23 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

Introduction

An Urgent Response to AIDS

1. Unless There Is Change, 200 Million People Will Die of AIDS

Unless something changes over 200 million men, women and children will die because of AIDS. Already more than half a billion people know a friend or relative who has died -just one of the 40 million adults and children with AIDS, buried or cremated by the start of 2002. Yet despite all that, this new epidemic is spreading faster than ever among the poorest nations, killing four times as many people every year as a decade ago. People just don't realise the danger - or don't want to think about it. [Page 9]

2. Other Parts of the World Have Not Learned From Africa

What is very upsetting is that so many of the lessons of the African epidemic back in the late 1980s have not yet been learned in other parts of the world fifteen years later. Even now we still see denial by governments and entire nations who seem to think that somehow "it will never happen to us. We will only have a few cases". And still the prejudice and fear remains in many places. [Page 11]

3. Epidemic in the Earliest Stages

With over 80 million already HIV infected the epidemic is still in the earliest stages. Mumbai alone is seeing over 1,000 new infections every night and India could see more HIV cases over the next 15 years than there have been in the entire world until now. [Page 11]

4. Uganda is an Example of Hope for the Future

Uganda is a wonderful example of what can happen when governments and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) work in partnership. The AIDS Control Programme has seen a dramatic fall in infection rates, particularly among the young - from 22% to less than 8%. This could not have been achieved without church support. It's a sign of hope for the future. [Page 12]

5. Two Simple Solutions

Christians from every tradition can unite easily in two simple aims:

- Unconditional, compassionate care for all affected by HIV / AIDS
- Effective prevention respecting and upholding the historic teachings of the church. [Page 12]

6. Show the Unconditional Love of God No Matter What Condition

The way of Jesus is clear: we are called to express the unconditional love of God to all in need regardless of how they come to be so.

If someone is seriously hurt in a car crash just outside my house I rush out to help. I don't walk away just because I find out he's drunk and that is why there was an accident. Nor do I start preaching anti-drunkenness sermons in the ambulance or on the ward. I do however talk about the story wherever I go, pointing out dangers of drinking and driving.

With those affected by HIV/AIDS we are called to be helpful, to care and express love. We are there as servants to help as the person wishes and it is a privilege to do so. Many are shocked to find Christians involved who care deeply while unable to endorse certain lifestyles. [Page 14]

7. Need to Follow God's Ways

Faced with a world disaster resulting largely from ignoring God's ways it would be unimaginable for the church to be silent. It is a fact that if everyone kept to one partner for life, and ceased injecting drugs, HIV would be wiped off the face of this earth in less than 30 years. It is also true that continuing without restraint over the same period could cost over 200 million people's lives. [Page 15]

Chapter One-AIDS Is Your Problem Too

8. One in 200 Adults Infected

Within a few years every person in the world will probably know personally someone who has died because of AIDS. More than one in 200 of all adults walking on the earth are infected. [Page 19]

9. HIV is Spreading Twice as Fast as Five Years Ago

By 2002 over 80 million people had probably been infected with HIV - no one knows accurate figures. And HIV is spreading twice as fast across the world today as five years ago. [Page 19]

10. Severe Discrimination for AIDS Victims

In Calcutta, India, a brand new AIDS ward was padlocked shut because no doctors or nurses could be found to work in it. In the same city a mother and newborn baby were thrown onto the streets when the medics found the mother had HIV infection. In Uganda fellow villagers have turned their backs in the past on people with AIDS dying without food or water, in case they died themselves entering the homes of the sick. [Page 20]

11. Worldwide AIDS is not the Image of the West

AIDS is the silent killer because by the time you know you've got it it's too late. But the trouble is that HIV is spreading fast with 15,000 new infections every day, and in spite of what many Westerners have been told, most of the people infected worldwide are neither gay men nor drug addicts. [Page 21]

12. Death Toll of AIDS is Equal to 20 Vietnam Wars

If everyone infected with HIV survived only six weeks, the USA would be in national mourning and the economy would be in a state of collapse. There would be mass panic. Vietnam wiped out 50,000 American young men from the US army over ten years. With over a million HIV infections in the US so far, AIDS makes those war deaths look almost insignificant. Even if there is not a single new infection in the USA after the moment you buy this book, the death toll will be the equivalent of twenty Vietnam wars. [Page 26]

Chapter Two- Vaccines, Treatments and Condoms

No one dies solely of AIDS

13. Definitions of HIV and AIDS

AIDS is a condition when a particular virus has weakened your body so other germs can invade and kill you. That's what the name 'AIDS' means: your body is usually very good at destroying germs. We call this immunity. When your immune defenses are badly damaged, we say you are suffering from an immune deficiency. Some people are born with bad immune systems and others acquire a deficiency because

of a disease. Because AIDS is acquired through an infection, we call it the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS for short).

HIV just stands for Human Immune-deficiency Virus, which is the scientific name for the virus which causes AIDS. Whatever names we use, one thing is important and that is to realise that there are stages from being infected, where a person is an infectious carrier but well, through to early symptoms, and then finally to more severe illness or death. The process takes years. It is totally impossible to tell by appearances who is infectious and who is not. [Pages 29-30]

14. Other Diseases Finally Kill the AIDS Victim

No one dies solely of AIDS. You die largely because of the other infections that take over your body when your defenses are damaged, or from cancers related to HIV. TB is a common killer of people with advanced HIV infection. [Page 31]

15. People are Making A Lot of Money Out of AIDS

Some people are pushing fad diets, whole-meal foods, vitamins in large doses, exercise, sleep and psychotherapy in varying combinations as a cure for AIDS. What value do these things have?

It is true that if your soldier cells aren't working too well then anything that helps your immunity is going to help keep you healthy, and things which make you run down and prone to being ill should be avoided. Common sense tells you to take care of yourself. Eat proper regular meals, take some exercise, keep your weight reasonable, eat plenty of fresh fruit, cut out the smoking, cut down on alcohol and stop all other recreational drugs and make sure you get enough sleep. These low-cost measures are likely to prolong the life and well-being of most people and especially of those with AIDS or early HIV infection.

However, some people are advertising all kinds of very expensive and useless remedies. A lot of people are making a lot of money out of AIDS.

It's true that there are some very expensive medicines available in some countries called HIV protease inhibitors and other things. But these just damp down the fire, they don't put it out. They are all poisonous so you can die from over-treatment and that means many hospital tests. The medicines have to be taken for life. [Page 33]

16. Income-generation Schemes Have a Vital Role

[] one of the weapons against HIV is economic growth: encouraging investment, business and international trade. Microbanking, income-generation schemes, and

other self-help programmes have a vital role to play, not only in raising general incomes in a nation, but also in helping those with HIV rebuild their lives and helping orphans survive. I have seen 40,000 people lifted simultaneously out of absolute poverty in places like Delhi: people who had been in tents and slum dwellings now living in two story houses with all facilities, and with successful businesses, largely as a result of micro-banking schemes, where groups of women take out small loans together for several businesses and guarantee each other. [Page 46]

Chapter Three- Agony of AIDS

17. HIV is less Infectious than Hepatitis B

HIV is much less infectious than for example hepatitis B. Let us suppose there is an accident while a doctor is taking blood from someone with HIV and he pricks himself with the needle. We know from many such events that infection is unusual as a result - it is a risk of one in 200 or more. So a doctor would need to have around 200 accidents like that on average before becoming infected himself, because the amount of HIV you need is quite high to get an infection. But with hepatitis B a doctor would only need to have 5 accidents on average to get infected. [Pages 55-56]

18. AIDS Is Not Carried by Mosquitoes

I have heard that mosquitoes have spread AIDS in Africa. Is this true and could I get AIDS from being bitten in this country?'

Millions of people all over the world are worried about this question, and whenever I am in Africa it is one of the commonest things I am asked about. We are sure that the answer is 'no' in Africa and 'no' anywhere else. If AIDS was being spread by this route, then all the areas of Africa worst affected by malaria would be worst affected by AIDS too, because malaria is carried by the mosquito. [Pages 60-61]

19. Not Insect Truly Transmits HIV

The only insect that we think could possibly transmit HIV is the bed bug, because when they grow big and fat they eat and carry a lot of blood, and some of this can be injected into the next victim. However, the amount of blood is still so small that someone has calculated that you would have to be bitten an average of 15,000 times to be infected! [Page 61]

Chapter Five- What Do You Think?

20. No One Knows Where AIDS Came From

Everyone seems to want to point the finger when it comes to AIDS. They begin arguing perhaps about where AIDS first came from. The true answer is no one knows, although we are sure that HIV was around in several parts of the world in the 1960s similar to common viruses in animals and has probably been around in some shape or form for centuries. Because many scientists think it could originally have come from animals in Africa, people immediately think Africa is in some way to blame. This is stupid. Whatever the facts show in the future the disease had to start somewhere and it is no fault where it first came from. [Page 73]

21. AIDS is Not the Wrath of God

AIDS is not the wrath of God and it never was. If it was the judgment of God on people with multiple sex partners, why is it that homosexuals and heterosexuals are affected while lesbians never so? Lesbians (homosexual women) are the only group in our society, other than monks or nuns, in whom AIDS is almost unknown. It is very hard indeed for a lesbian to pass on the infection to another woman she has sex with. God's judgement is remarkably selective if we are to take such a judgmental position. This would mean that God hates sex between two men, next he hates sex between a man and a woman outside marriage, but he doesn't really mind sex between two women. This is clearly absurd. As a friend of mine said recently, if this is a blast of God's anger about homosexual and heterosexual lifestyles from God's shotgun, he has a pretty poor aim! What about tens of thousands of young children infected in Africa as a result of medical treatments? God's wrath on those who are ill and need medical care? [Page 75]

22. What Can the Church Do?

Start with what you have. I recently visited a school for AIDS orphans and an income generation project started by six grandmothers in a very poor area of Uganda. They started with what they had and got on with it themselves, gradually mobilising others in the village and little by little the work has been established. They saved up and bought some land. Then they saved to buy a cow. The milk from that cow pays to run the school. Gradually they made bricks and replaced the straw roof on poles with a small building. And then they built another. They started to teach the children as best they could in their own spare time. Everyone was helping. Some brought food, others cooked, others carried water each day so the thirsty children could drink. The grandmothers realised they needed some training and went off to government programmes to get a basic qualification. A visitor came and gave them money to get electricity. Another provided a pipe for running water. Another gave them a sewing machine to train older girls... and gradually the work has grown.

Every church can encourage members to do something to help. As George Hoffman, the founder of Tear Fund, once said: "You can't change the whole world but you can change someone's world somewhere."

Go with food to a family stricken by AIDS today. Go and comfort a widow or an orphan today.

Go and encourage someone who is giving their lives to AIDS ministry today.

Pray for God's protection on them and for God's provision.

And you may be part of the answer to those prayers ! [Pages 102-103]

Chapter Seven- What Can We Do? Time For Action

23. New Programs That Stem the Tide Are Needed

What about larger projects? Thousands of programmes have been developed, countless papers published and millions of dollars expended in the struggle against HIV/AIDS. Yet spread of the pandemic rapidly continues. Many governments and NGO agencies now recognise that their strategies are failing to stem the tide, yet continue to pump money into condom distribution alone and one-off awareness campaigns, neither of which address related problems such as poverty, education, the rights of women, and broader lifestyle questions. [Page 106]

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