

Parenting with Purpose

Addressing sexual sin,
pornography, and holiness in
our homes

INTRODUCTION

***There is no greater desire
a Christian parent has for
their children than that
they would come to know
Jesus and walk with him
faithfully.***



We pray for them and lead them to the things of Jesus. We recognize that our children will face an onslaught of pains, wounds, trials, and temptations, and we do everything in our power to protect them at all costs.

Perhaps one of the areas we most desire to see our children protected is in all things related to sexual sin and holiness. But for those of us who grew up in the Bible belt Christian perspective of purity culture, we find the guidelines and laws which our teachers drilled into us in those youth group meetings, where they separated the boys and the girls, did little to curb the sexual sin plaguing us and our friends; we worry about offering those same archaic rules to our kids to have them fail all over again.

How many times did we sign a "True Love Waits" pledge? How many times did we set up accountability? How many times did we make sure to renew the purity pledge? How many times did we weep at the altar at church camp over the sexual sin that wrecked us, to go home and fail again and again? Now, here we are as adults, wondering how to protect our kids when we never quite felt protected ourselves. We have almost come to accept "some" sexual sin as normal and unavoidable. "Every kid is just going to struggle in this area in one way or another," we tell ourselves.

Or maybe you walked the line well. Perhaps you followed all the rules. Maybe you ticked every box of purity and had just the right amount of shame in your dating relationship to keep you from ever crossing the imaginary line into impurity. Maybe, just maybe, the fear of the consequences was enough to keep the sin at bay. You didn't want to disappoint your parents or, worse, you didn't want to disappoint God. Your view of sex was that it was all sinful unless it was in marriage. And so you did what everyone expected of you. You kept any temptations and weaknesses at a distance the best you could while simultaneously feeling guilty for even having a thought you deemed "too risqué." The law and rules given to you weren't easy, but they seemed to work for you, so you are content to pass them on to your children in the hopes that somehow they too can be one of the few who follow the rules well. Or at least follow the rules most of the time.

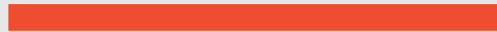
I hold my teachers accountable for what they gave us, but I don't bear a grudge towards them. Our teachers, when they gave us the law, thought they were giving us Jesus, because it was how their teachers had passed it down to them. And so it goes, fifty years ago, and a hundred years ago, that the teachers stood before their young Christian students, highlighting the wickedness of "loose" people and the shame of sex. The list of rules grew at every turn. In the college ministry I was part of, if you were going to be in leadership, you had to sign a contract that you would not go to the clubs to dance, would not touch alcohol, and would not be over at your boyfriend's or girlfriend's apartment after midnight." Because, "nothing good happens after midnight." I always wondered if they thought that sex only happened after midnight and before six in the morning. But those were the rules if you wanted to be on the leadership team. They meant well. But they missed the mark.

Then the internet arrived, and we had a whole new set of rules to follow. Men's ministries, such as Promise Keepers, set up entire ministries geared to help "godly" men maintain accountability online. You would download one of several programs to your computer that would track the websites you visited. At the end of every day, the program would send an email to your chosen friend, letting them know if you had visited any questionable sites. Coliseums of men, I was one of them on several occasions, were warned to guard themselves from pornography. After all, to even "look at a woman with lust was to commit adultery," according to Matthew 5. Then the speaker would tell you all about how the program worked and "if you just sign up today and put your email and your friend's email, then we can make sure you are guarded from sin."

However, something was missing in all of this. It wasn't the rules. There were plenty of those to go around, and the powers that be continually added new rules. "Here's how you behave when you're dating. Here's how to behave when you're engaged. Don't have lunch with someone of the opposite sex. Don't watch these shows. Don't listen to this music. Don't talk about these things. Don't go on this website. Don't make these jokes. Don't wear these clothes. Don't look twice. Don't do this. Don't do that. Be sure to put on the armor of God every morning. Be sure you are praying. Read the Psalms. Have an accountability group. Confess. Sign this card. Pledge yourself to purity again." Even as you read these things, you may feel that these are all solid plans. You might argue that these things are precisely what will protect the next generation of Christians (even though they seem to have failed our generation). But, again, something is missing. The problem with each of these views is that they don't have the gospel at the core of their instruction.

Where does the death of Jesus and his resurrection fit into all of these guidelines?

And is this really how the Bible teaches us to safeguard ourselves and our kids?



THE THEOLOGY OF LAW AND GRACE

One day I will write an entire book on the topic of Law vs. Grace, but today is not that day. Still, it is crucial for us moving forward to have a basic grasp of the difference between Law and Grace in the Scriptures so that we can see the fallacy of trying to curb the sinful approach to sex with rules.

Paul, in talking about righteousness, says, "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.' " (*Galatians 3:10*) We seem to forget that the law was only efficacious as a means for righteousness and holiness if it was followed in its entirety. In *James 2:10*, the author reminds us that if anyone fails in only a single part of the law, they are guilty of breaking the whole of it. Again, Paul reminds his audience that those who wish to hold to circumcision as a requirement for righteousness are required then to uphold the entire law. (*Galatians 5:3*)

We see, then, that the law is not something we take piecemeal, but is a single unit. If we are required to hold to one part of it for holiness, then we must hold to all of it, and if we violate a single part of it, then we have violated all of it. We should remember that the works of the law justify no one. (*Galatians 2:16*)

***So then, if the law can not impart
righteousness, neither can it
uphold righteousness.***

One of my favorite texts that compares law and grace can be found in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. There we find that the letter of the law kills, but the Spirit gives us life. The law is called a **ministry of death and condemnation**, but the ministry of the Spirit is the **ministry of life and righteousness**. Furthermore, though the law once had glory and beauty, it has now come to have no glory or beauty in light of the greater glory and beauty of the Spirit and righteousness. (2 Corinthians 3:5-11)

Those who would argue that the law is good are right. Paul makes the same argument. But the law was good in that it was the tutor and fore-runner to the riches of righteousness through faith in Jesus. The law did, in fact, have glory and beauty, like a flashlight on a dark night.

But just like that flashlight is without glory in the brightness of the noonday sun, so also the law has come to have no glory when compared to the riches of righteousness in Christ by the Spirit of God.

Furthermore, if the law can only produce condemnation and death, then it is cruel for us as parents to use the standard of the law as the measuring stick for holy living with our children. They can never feel anything but condemnation and failure. But if we offer our children the gospel of Jesus, that Jesus has broken the power of sin through his death, that the Spirit of God now indwells them and imbues them with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, that they have everything they need for life and godliness; then we can see our children walk in life and righteousness. (Romans 6:6-14; Romans 8:9; Romans 8:11; Ephesians 1:19-20; 2 Peter 1:3-4) The sooner we abandon the idea that following the ever-growing list of rules will preserve us in holiness and instead cling to the life-giving love of Jesus, the better off we will be. The better off our children will be.

There is much more to be said on this topic than we have time for here, but don't take the brevity of this section as an indication that it is unimportant. In living out the righteousness that God has gifted us through faith, there is no more important conversation than the end of the Old Covenant of law and the inauguration of the New Covenant of grace through Jesus. (See also Hebrews 7:18-19; Hebrews 8:7, 13; Hebrews 10:1-14)

THE THEOLOGY OF SEX

When I was growing up, it seemed to me that the general party line about sex in Christian circles was, "sex is sinful." Every youth meeting or every event in college that addressed sex seemed to talk about it as something to avoid. Sex was discussed with blushes and whispers and handled with shame. No wonder there is so much sexual sin in our churches today. Our teachers and parents told us it was a wicked thing to avoid at all costs, "until we were married." You may be surprised to know that over thirty years of ministry, I have encountered many young Christian couples who, in marriage, still felt shame and embarrassment about their sexual relationship because they were only ever taught about sex as a shameful and embarrassing thing. The shame and humiliation they carried forward from a legalistic, though well-intended, instruction had shaped and soured their marriage relationship.

I believe we can rectify the conversation about sex as a shameful thing with a single question. Was sex in place before or after the fall into sin? If we argue that sex existed prior to sin, and of course it did, then we have to say that sex is beautiful and holy. ***It would serve us better to talk about sex as something holy and worth guarding rather than sinful to avoid.*** Let me put it in a different language for us. "God is love." (1 John 4:8, 16) Real love originates in the personhood of God. Anything

that is not of God is not love. It is a facsimile, a sham, an idol, but it is not love. ***God sets the standard.*** God is the one who is in his very nature love, so all true love flows from him. It would be silly for us to spend all of our time as a parent trying to teach our kids everything in the world that is not truly love, and they wouldn't be any closer to understanding the truth. So, with every ounce of our being, we try to show our kids the unfading love of God every single day. The same is true about the perspective of sex. We don't talk, first, about the shameful, sinful, idolatrous side of it. We shape for our children the beauty and holiness of it.

Rather than teaching them sex is something filthy to avoid, we give them something to treasure and guard.

It is also important for us to see that God uses sex as an analogy to talk about his relationship to Israel (his bride) in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the sexual relationship is used as an analogy to the relationship Christ has with the church (his bride). In *Ezekiel 16*, God betroths himself to the young nation of Israel and takes the nation as his wife. But Israel proves to be an unfaithful bride, turning to other "lovers," in fact to other gods. God calls Israel an "adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband." (*Ezekiel 16:1-35*) The opening chapters of Hosea address the same sin of Israel in the same language of marriage. In *1 Corinthians 6*, in response to sexual sin from chapter 5, Paul reminds his readers that those who join themselves sexually to a prostitute become one flesh with her in the same way as those who join themselves to the Lord become one Spirit with him. (*1 Corinthians 6:12-20*) In all of these cases, the sexual relationship is used to help picture the closeness in the relationship God desires to have with His people. In fact, God instituted marriage in *Genesis 2* for the express purpose of imaging him. He created Adam and Eve in his image and then commanded them to multiply that image on the earth. That is not just a command to have children, but a command to multiply God's image in the earth. We know that in heaven we are neither married nor given in marriage, so we see then that the intent of marriage, and by extension sex, was always about better understanding who God is. (*Matthew 22:30*)

My wife, Michele, and I met and married in 2006. God joined us together in a covenant through sex and made us into one flesh, not for our ultimate good, but for God's ultimate glory and revelation. Every Christian marriage is a telling of the gospel and glory of God. However, not every Christian marriage accurately conveys the truth about the gospel. I mean to say that we Christians do not get to decide if the purpose of our marriage is the glory and revealing of the gospel of God. That is the biblical intent of marriage. By the way we conduct ourselves in marriage, we are either proclaiming the truth or a lie about who God is. Sex, by extension of the marriage covenant, is where the husband and wife come together to be formed into one flesh "naked and without shame." (*Genesis 2:24-25*) As Christians, we stand before God fully exposed, with no secret sin concealed

from his sight, and beautifully, we can stand in his presence without fear of condemnation on the basis of Jesus, our Savior. Furthermore, as we have already seen in *Corinthians*, as sex joins the husband and wife in a bond of unity so that they become, in God's sight, one flesh; so also are we now counted as one in Spirit with Christ by our faith.

We see then that marriage and sex are just analogies, just emblems of the deeper spiritual truth of salvation, righteousness, and standing before God, bare in his presence, without shame or fear.

This spiritual truth gets lost in the language of "sex is just for marriage," "sex outside of marriage is sinful," "abstinence is how we honor God," and even "if you look at a woman with lust, you have already committed adultery." But when we teach sex from the place of its holy position as a story of the beauty and glory of the gospel, it shapes not only how we regard it, but also the care with which we treat it. Communion is a meal of bread and wine that reminds us of the broken body and blood of Jesus. It speaks of the cross. We approach it with solemnity and joy. It is not the substance of Christ, but points to our crucified Savior. Water baptism does not cleanse the conscience of sin, does not wash away sin, but does speak to the death of Jesus and his resurrection as well as our having been buried and raised up with him by faith. Water baptism is a beautiful storytelling of the saving work God has done in our lives through his Son. Marriage and sex should fall into the same category, but perhaps with even more weight attached to them since God founded them on the opening pages of the Scripture.

THE THEOLOGY OF SEXUAL SIN

Since sex is intended to be a proper representation of God's close relationship to his people, and Christ's relationship to those redeemed by faith, sexual sin is a perversion of who God is and his work. Let's examine three ways this is true.

Adultery is one of the most evident examples in Scripture. I've already referenced both Ezekiel and Hosea. In each of these texts, Israel is called an adulterous bride when "she" turns away from the living God to the false gods of the nations. These two prophets are not alone in their accusation of adultery, as this language is repeated throughout the Old Testament. Don't lose sight of the fact that earthly marriage is a telling of the more profound spiritual truth. God uses the figurative language of "adultery" to point to the spiritual reality of "idolatry." The people of Israel, by turning to other gods, were declaring that their "husband," God, was not sufficient to satisfy their desires or meet their needs. They needed God plus another god, or even other gods. In marriage, one of the reasons adultery is so painful is because the offending spouse has declared, through their adultery, to the offended spouse, "You are not enough to satisfy me." However, the reason it is such a costly sin, in a spiritual sense, is because of what it declares about our relationship with Christ. Our earthly affairs are connected to a deeper spiritual sin: Jesus does not satisfy our hearts. The earthly is the analogy of the spiritual. The man who is not pleased by his wife and searches out other lovers is also a man who does not find satisfaction in Christ and is indeed seeking pleasure in other places and other avenues.

Pornography is a sin that says of the image on the screen or in the pages, "I have no desire to serve you, but only a desire to be served by you."

The individual who pursues sexual satisfaction through the means of pornography is a self-centered individual who is not in the least bit interested in a reciprocal relationship where each party gives one hundred percent. Instead, the sinner is only interested in having their sexual appetites and fantasies satisfied by the image(s) on page and screen. What this analogy conveys to us about the relationship between such a person and Christ is that they are not interested in serving their Lord and King, but only in being served by Him. You will find in this individual that the moment they feel God has not done for them what they desired, they shake their fist at heaven and revile the Savior. After all, they aren't here for anything but that which they can gain from him.

Paul mentions *homosexual relationships* in Romans as the result of people who have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and were therefore handed over to their own lustful appetites. (Romans 1:18-32) Those who seek out same sex relationships are, in the analogy, saying that they are only interested in a God of their own likeness. You don't even have to try hard to find that people in the LGBTQ community, who still speak about God, have so twisted who he is that he is no longer recognizable as the God of the Bible. Instead, (FIX THIS) God has become so much like the sinner that the two are indistinguishable.

When we address sexual sin, we don't approach it first from the aspect of the sin itself, but rather we approach it from what it is declaring falsely about God. The goal isn't to get people to avoid sexual sin, though decades have been spent with that as a chief aim. The true and spiritual aim is that we followers of Christ would rightly know and represent Jesus our Lord, Savior, and King.

This is just the beginning of the conversation. These pages will help us to begin to be gospel minded in our thoughts and teachings on sexual holiness. Consider this:

If we accept that marriage and sex existed before sin.

(and we must)

If we accept that marriage and sex are temporary institutions in this flesh and blood life.

(and we must)

If we accept that God uses the language of marriage and sex to speak about his relationship to his people.

(and we must)

If we accept that earthly marriage and sex are an analogy, telling the story of God and the great news of the gospel.

(and we must)

Then we must address marriage, sex, and the holiness of the two from the perspective of the deeper spiritual truth of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

WHEN TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION

Okay, how in the world do we broach this subject with our children? And when is the right time? I vividly remember my mother putting a tape series by James Dobson in the living room stereo and playing it while she cleaned the house. "Preparing for Adolescence" was a six-tape series, and the one on sex was very awkward. I was so glad my mother was dusting the bookcase instead of looking me in the face. I didn't hear a single word of it. I was probably 14 years old and melted in embarrassment into the recliner. A few months later, I snuck the tape series out of her closet and listened to the entire set again on my own.

Some of you will want to talk to your kids about sex and holiness from a very early age, and others of you will want to wait until they enter their teen years. It may completely depend on the child. Not all kids are the same. I will say this: Don't underestimate the exposure to pornography and sex that your child may have. I had a friend whose father started showing him porn at three years old. I have another friend whose parents took him to see a rated R movie when he was just six because they couldn't find a babysitter. The film contained multiple scenes of women in various stages of nudity. Kids have cell phones now, and pornography is just a tap away. I stumbled upon my grandfather's stash of Playboy once when over at their house for a week. I had a friend whose middle school daughter was invited to a party by upperclassmen where the girls had to perform sexual favors for the older boys. Some kids in elementary school are already sexually active. The movies we allow our children to watch, the things they hear people talking about, how we as parents dishonor God in our sexual desires and appetites, and the overt sexualization of our culture all lead to opportunities for our kids to have a sinful view of sex. Better we get ahead of it. It is easier to prevent an infection through healthy practices than it is to fight it once it has taken hold of our children. Here are just a few ideas to get you started and how we began and continued the conversation in our home. I am bound to share personal examples because they are the ones I know the best, but please don't take what Michele and I did as a prescription to follow.

Just use the following to help you begin to frame how these conversations might look in your home and with each of your unique and wonderful children.

WITH THE LITTLE ONES

For us, it started when they were old enough to bathe themselves. We talked to them about privacy. We discussed private parts with them. I did most of the talking with them since Michele and I have two sons. I gave them some fundamental concepts.

1. No one is allowed to see you naked. That's your private business.
2. You are not allowed to see other people naked. That is their private business.
3. Sometimes a doctor has to examine our private areas, but only with Dad present.
4. Dad is a boy, so it's okay if he has to see you naked, but only as an exception and not the rule.
5. If anyone asks to see you naked or tries to touch any of your private parts, you tell Mom and Dad immediately. (Even if they ask you to keep it a secret.)
6. Mom and Dad can see each other naked because it is a special gift from God, and God joined Mom and Dad into one when they got married.
7. Mom and Dad don't get to see other people naked because that's only for husbands and wives.

Our ultimate goal is to build a foundation in Christ, through which our growing children can glorify God; we also aim to protect our children. These simple ideas can help accomplish both.

I know these seem overly simplistic, but our boys were very young, and this was meant to be an introduction to sexuality. That is how we started the conversation. With that established, we were able to build on that framework as time moved on. I might be out on a limb here, but you can't start the conversation too early. Even these few things above can be understood by a small child. You don't have to bake the whole cake for them yet, but you can certainly give them some of the ingredients.

Some of you may be in a situation as a single parent, where you may need to adjust some of these guidelines. Some of you are in situations where your kids may need more care or longer personal care. If we remember that we are trying to point our kids to Jesus, it will help shape, for us, how we start these conversations. It's likely that I could have been and should have been more biblical in my approach to teaching my very young children these ideas. After all, I had never been a parent before, and at each stage, I have had to start afresh with the question, "How do I shape Jesus in the lives of my children at this stage of life?" What if our initial conversation started more like this? (Keeping in mind that Christ is the ultimate objective)

1. God made you and created you; your mind, your soul, and your body.

2. All of our parts were made by God, and we were made to know God and love him.

3. God gave girls and boys different parts.

4. All people have private parts. We don't show other people our private parts, and we don't ask to see other people's private parts. If someone ever tries to touch or see your private parts, you should tell Mom or Dad. Mom and Dad love you and want to protect you.

5. Sometimes Doctors have to see our private parts. Yes, even for Mom and Dad. But that is only okay if Mom or Dad is with you.

6. Did you know that Mom can see Dad's private parts, and Dad can see Mom's private parts? But that is just because God allowed Mom and Dad to get married, and we take care of each other. It is a special gift just for Mom and Dad.

7. But Mom and Dad don't get to see other people's private parts. God wouldn't want us to do that.

Again, at this point, we are just introducing the language of God, creation, privacy, and marriage to our little ones. We are establishing the system of correct thinking about sex so we can build on it at each age. I would encourage you not to have a long conversation with your children about this. Attention spans may be short. Let it be a quick statement here or there. Remind them from time to time of a single truth. However you go about it, be sure that God is introduced to the conversation.



WITH KIDS IN ELEMENTARY

Sex, as a more specific topic, was discussed with my boys probably by the time they were seven or eight. It helped that we were raising goats at the time. They knew what "mating" was and that it resulted in their females becoming pregnant and giving birth to offspring. There was a great deal of excitement when we would go out and see the brand-new baby goats and hold them. And when the male goat was mating with the females, I just told them that. "He's a boy goat, and she's a girl goat, and he's mating with her. That's how she will get pregnant." I wasn't crude about it. But when it came time to have further discussion about privacy, nudity, and sex, it was an easy segue.

"You know how your goats mate and have babies. Well, people do that too. We just don't usually call it mating. We call it sex. It is how your mom ended up pregnant with you guys. We had sex and she got pregnant. Sex is a gift from God for a husband and a wife to share. It started with Adam and Eve. The Bible says they were naked and felt no shame. That's how God planned it out. A husband and wife don't have to be embarrassed to be naked together. If I were naked with anyone else, I would probably be VERY embarrassed. I still have dreams sometimes that I showed up to preach at a church without any clothes on. Those dreams always make me wake up in a cold sweat. That would be awful. But it is a blessing and a gift for a husband and wife. Since sex is a gift for a husband and wife to share, I would not want to have sex with someone who wasn't my wife. That would not honor God, and it wouldn't be the right way to use the gift. You know how I always tell you to use things for their intended purpose so you don't break them? Sex is the same way. God made it for an intended purpose to be a blessing for the husband and wife to share. And because it is a gift and a treasure, we guard it and keep it safe. We want to honor God and honor this gift he has given to a husband and a wife. That's the main reason we keep our nakedness private, and we don't look at other people's nakedness. Your mom is my wife. If I were looking at other naked women, then I am not honoring God, your mom, or the gift of sex. That other woman isn't my wife, and since that goes outside of God's purpose for sex, I am wrong. Remember, "the husband and wife were naked and felt no shame." When sex is between a husband and wife, there is no shame, because it is being used as God designed it."

You will notice that my conversation isn't about sex being "bad" or "dirty." We want to instill a biblical perspective in our kids, and with each step we take, we are laying and/or building on that foundation. If we lay a correct and Christ-centered foundation, then we can build carefully on that at each level. The difficulty is pivoting from "this is something you should be ashamed of" to "this is something holy to guard," so it is essential to start from the perspective that sex is a holy thing rather than an unholy thing. As parents, our temptation will always be to focus on the negative. We do that. From the time our kids are babies, we give them negative instructions. And they make sense.

"Don't touch the stove when I'm cooking."

We don't want them to reach up and burn their fingers.

"Don't run out into the street."

We don't want them to get hit by a passing car.

"Don't pet a strange dog."

We don't want them to get bitten.

And so the list of negatives we give our kids goes on and on. From a practical standpoint, we need to give our kids the negative, otherwise they may "shoot their eye out." The problem is that spiritual truths and practical truths can't be approached the same way, though we often do. We treat sexual sin as a practical problem to be addressed, as a way our children may be harmed, and so we seek to protect them. But, as we have already noted, sex was created by God before the fall into sin and is therefore holy. Furthermore, marriage, and by extension, sex, is a picture of God, Jesus, the gospel, and the relationship between Christ and the church.

There is nothing more beautiful in all the world than the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Since sex is a part of that story, we don't want to paint it first in a negative light, but a positive one.

Our language about sex can, and will, shape the perspective our kids have about it from an early age.

Most kids in elementary school don't need a detailed conversation about sex, but since we are laying a foundation of truth, we want to be sure we are speaking about it from a place of holiness.

One additional plea: Don't discuss with your elementary-age children whether they have boyfriends or girlfriends. When we tease or joke about our first grader having "a little girlfriend" at school, we are actually pressing fast forward on their exposure to relationships and, unwillingly, to sexual relationships. Suppose you have been joking with your prepubescent about whether or not they hold hands or kiss their little boyfriend or girlfriend. In that case, you are laying a foundation that says relationships, and later sexual relationships, are not to be taken seriously. Let your six-year-old just be a six-year-old.



WITH KIDS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

By this age, most of your public school kids will have had the puberty talk at school if you allowed them to attend that. That happened in fifth grade for our boys. The video they show is introductory and covers a wide range of topics. Usually, the video is divided into a girl's part and a boy's part, and students only watch the part of the video that corresponds to them specifically. I watched the entire video on my own, then again with each kid, before they watched it at school. I didn't want my kids' introduction to puberty to be an awkward classroom setting with a cartoon. We watched the video, and I allowed them to ask any questions they desired.

One quick note about questions: if we approach the conversation about sexuality from a holy perspective, free from shame and guilt, then our kids will be more inclined to ask us questions. We humans don't like to talk about things that embarrass and shame us, so when we approach sex from a biblical standpoint, when we are godly and loving parents, our kids will feel there is at least room for a discussion. In any area where we would like to be educated, the freedom to ask questions is a blessing.

Also at this age, practically every one of their classmates had cell phones. I talked to my kids at this age about pornography. (Based on all the latest data, the conversation surrounding pornography may need to happen even earlier.) I explained that pornography was either pictures or videos of people in various stages of undress. It was now that I began to build out the seriousness and theological implications of sexuality for my boys. I tried to do so in four ways. (Remember that these are not directions for you to follow, but rather a reference point to help you begin to develop some ideas about how to speak to your kids. At the end of the booklet, I will offer some possible conversation starters that may be helpful as well.)

First of all, the person on that screen is not my spouse, and therefore can not rightly proclaim or glorify God. Remember, we always start with the spiritual and work out from there. We aren't trying to add the truth of Jesus as an afterthought. I remind them that God designed marriage to be a representation of the love Jesus has for the Church. I remind them that the relationship between Christ and the Church is that Jesus loved us so much he died for us, and when we see how much Jesus loves us, it stirs up our love for him. I show them how pornography is one-sided. That in the pursuit of pornography, there can be no reciprocal relationship. It can not honor God. Furthermore, because the use of porn is a selfish act, it reveals, as earlier stated, that we don't actually have an interest in serving God, but only being served by him.

Second, it does not honor the person on the screen or page. We are to view all people in one of two frameworks. One, they are a lost person in need of a Savior and someone for whom Christ Jesus shed his blood. Second, they are fellow believers and are righteous and holy in the sight of God, and they should be treated accordingly. For those individuals who are the subject of the pornography, it is impossible for us to delight in them sinfully and also desire that they come to know Jesus. You can't have competing goals for them, because either one would undo the other.



***Whether we are talking to
our sons or our daughters,
the emphasis is on
glorifying God.***

Third, continued exposure to porn desensitizes the user to sexual sin, adultery, abuse, and violence; almost ensuring that by continued use, you will be unable to enjoy your spouse one day because you are increasingly incapable of being selfless in the marriage bed.

Fourth, there is a significant component of pornography that has at its core human trafficking and slavery, where people are abused and compelled into doing things online that they have no choice over. There is a lot of money made in human trafficking, sex slavery, and pornography. We should be proponents of rescuing people from such wicked circumstances and not aiding in the support of it.

Although I don't encourage dating at this age, I also don't discourage it. I remind my boys of two things. One, don't waste your time pursuing a young lady who is not intent upon living her life for the Lord. I remind my boys that the purpose of marriage is the right proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus, and that can't happen if one or both of the people in the relationship have little or no regard for Jesus. Two, honor the person you are dating. Very few people end up marrying their high school sweetheart, so chances are my boys are dating someone who will grow up to marry someone else. That means that the future wives of my boys are out there somewhere being dated. I remind my boys that the first aim in everything is to glorify God. Honor this young woman as a creation of Jesus. Honor her in the way you hope someone is honoring your future wife out there in the world.

Whether we are talking to our sons or our daughters, the emphasis is on glorifying God. I don't think it is beneficial at this point to tell a young person that every sexual partner they have had, or might have, is like giving a piece of themselves away. I have seen people take a twenty dollar bill, wrinkle it up, step on it, spill soda on it, tear the edge of it, and then say something along the lines of, "To God you're still worth \$20 even if you have been wrecked by sexual sin, but just look at how bad the money is stained and torn." I've seen other people take two pieces of paper, glue them together, and then immediately try to separate them from each other, leaving tears and bits of each paper stuck to the other. The lesson tends to sound like, "When we are 'joined' to someone else sexually, we can never separate from that person completely. We won't be the same ever again. We gave away a piece of ourselves to them, and they gave a piece of themselves to us." (And for some reason, these type of lessons are primarily taught to young women.)

These kinds of object lessons do little to curb sexual appetite. (See *Colossians 2:20-23*) Not only can these kinds of lessons not stop sin, they actually teach a lie about the state of a person who is in Christ by faith. If someone has genuinely come to faith in Jesus, they are wholly clean, not based on their works, but based on the shed blood of Jesus and the empty tomb. It is time for these kinds of lessons to fall into oblivion.

WITH KIDS IN HIGH SCHOOL

By this time, if you have laid the proper foundation for your kids and engaged in conversations about the holiness of Jesus, you will find that your kids have a solid grasp of the biblical truths of walking with Jesus and making choices for His glory. Sadly, we can't say they won't fail at all, but at least we haven't given the weak works of the law. Instead, we have offered our kids the greatest opportunity to honor God by showing them over and over again who God is and what it looks like to walk faithfully with Jesus.

The majority of our time should be spent rightly proclaiming Jesus rather than trying to guard our kids from sin. So shape their identity in Christ that they cannot possibly consider another way to live.

I remind my boys regularly that, once in Christ by faith, nothing can change that. If they have come to be followers of Jesus, then they **ARE** righteous, they **ARE** holy, they **ARE** fully loved, and they **ARE** uncondemned. That is their identity. But ALL of our choices have consequences. Sometimes those consequences will follow us for thirty seconds, sometimes the consequences will make it to the end of the week, and sometimes they will follow us the rest of our lives. The fact that our choices to dishonor God can't condemn us in no way ensures that we won't bear consequences for the rest of our days. I'm reminded of two funerals.

My dad died in a hospital room with no one next to him. There was no funeral for him—no nice words spoken at a graveside. No flowers. No songs. My dad had chosen to live for himself and his sinful pleasures for over fifty years. At the end of his days, we four children took his ashes, dumped them on the side of the road, and walked away. I haven't missed him a single day. That's the result of the choices he made. He made a mockery of Jesus, abandoned his family, wanted nothing to do with his kids or grandkids, and chose sinful revelry over God at every turn. I was at another funeral not too long ago of a young woman who died suddenly. She was a wife and mother. The funeral was packed. Testimony after testimony was shared about her love for Jesus, her husband, her kids, and her friends. Her faith was on display for all to see. People came to the funeral and left wanting to walk more faithfully with Jesus. That was the result of the choices she made. It's difficult for us to know in the moment what choices will follow us until tomorrow and which ones will follow us forever. So we must be careful to honor God at every turn.



Our emphasis, with our amazing children, is not sin avoidance but Christ adherence!

What I already tell my boys regularly as they leave the house is, "Be sure to honor God." What I will tell them when they go on a date: "Be sure to honor God, and be sure to honor her. Don't forget she belongs to Jesus. Don't forget that you belong to Jesus."

I couldn't possibly tell you how many times I've told my boys, "Make wise choices. Remember that all of our choices have consequences." I remind my boys that the people who have no relationship with Jesus have no desire to honor him. But I also remind them that plenty of people who call themselves Christians don't have any desire to honor the God they claim to serve. Since before they could walk, I told them that there is nothing more important than knowing and honoring Jesus.

A few years after I finished/left college, a book called *"I Kissed Dating Goodbye"* came out. Many people read that book and took all the laws and rules as "gospel" for how to handle courtship instead of dating. People believed that the book was going to save a generation of young Christians from sexual sin. But it didn't. It made many people arrogant and puffed up with their pretentious view of righteousness; it made plenty of people feel guilty who had failed to follow the parameters laid out in its pages, but it didn't actually cause people to draw near to God, at least not on a biblical level. In addition, the author of the book has since completely abandoned the faith he once claimed to love so much. Again, "by the works of the law no one is justified." All of the author's rules and guidelines could not keep him in Christ, because he lacked faith in God.

We do not need to constantly encourage our children to form accountability groups or sign a purity pledge. We don't need to make sure they have a healthy fear of STDs or teen pregnancy. We are not trying to get them to avoid dirty movies. We are not telling them horror stories of what can happen in sexually compromising situations, or how their reputations can be harmed, or how they might be sabotaging their futures. Instead, we constantly remind them that they belong to Jesus, that he loves them, that they are made holy and righteous through Him, and that their lives now belong to Jesus. Our emphasis, with our amazing children, is not **SIN AVOIDANCE** but **CHRIST ADHERENCE**.

And parents, you who are so faithfully praying for your children, a child who adheres well to Christ will avoid sin. (*Galatians 5:16*)

IF GOD IS ALREADY BEING DISHONORED

*It really is as simple
as reminding them of
the truth of the good
news of the gospel!*

For some of us as parents, our kids have already made costly choices. How do we handle such a situation in our homes without condemning our children to the idea that they have somehow failed beyond redemption, ruined any chance at true holiness, and have somehow tarnished who they are before God?

It really is as simple as reminding them of the truth of the good news of the gospel, "God demonstrated his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (*Romans 5:8*) Take that kid, that God blessed you with, and look them in the eyes and remind them that, because of their faith in the resurrected Savior, they stand before God uncondemned. Remind them that the Holy Spirit has sealed them in Jesus and has set them apart as holy. Remind them that they were lovingly made by our God and Father in heaven and that they were saved for His glory. Then tell them that as they come to understand God's unconditional love better, it will absolutely change who they are and bear the fruit of righteousness in their lives.

Please understand that it is not the works of the law that bear the fruit of righteous deeds in our lives;

***it is the understanding of the limitless love God
has for us that causes us to respond to him.***

PARTING THOUGHTS

*Developing a deep love
for Jesus will draw
people near to God and,
thereby, draw them away
from sin.*

We will likely always be inclined towards giving our children the law to safeguard them from sin. After all, most of us had our entire Christian life shaped by an adherence to the law. We have to hold in our hearts and minds that the law has never been capable of imparting righteousness and can do nothing to maintain it. Observance of the rules will not draw a person away from sin, nor will it draw them near to God. However, **developing a deep love for Jesus will draw people near to God and, thereby, draw them away from sin.**

One of the things I have seen frequently over three decades of ministry is ungodly counsel given to young couples who are already in sin. For example, a young "Christian" couple is engaging in sex, so the counsel from the pastor or other "godly" person sounds something like, "Well, since you are already having sex, you might as well get married." This is awful advice. Getting married doesn't fix the heart problem. If the couple is unwilling to honor God in their dating life and you rush them to marriage, you can be sure they will be unwilling to honor God in their married life. A wedding band accompanied by vows does not make a wayward heart suddenly faithful. Someone said to me recently, "They were already having sex, and she was already pregnant, so the right thing for them to do was to get married." I was grieved over such a thought. It would seem in that sort of counsel that we are more concerned with an appearance of law observation than that people would have hearts bent on honoring Christ.

Remember, we are not trying to treat the symptoms. We aren't, first of all, trying to keep our kids from sex, or pornography, or any of a dozen or so sexual sins. That can't be our first goal. If we only treat the symptoms, we may create people who adhere to the rules, but again, that doesn't mean they are holding well to Christ. It is possible to create a generation of "Christians" who don't engage in premarital sex, who don't engage in pornography, who don't dabble with homosexuality, who don't watch or listen to sexually explicit content; and yet still have a generation of "Christians" who are no nearer to the Lord in affection and glory.

It will be nearly impossible for you to instill a love for Jesus and the gospel in your kids if you personally are still more directed and guided by the rules than you are by Christ. If this change in perspective has not taken hold of you as the parent, how can you convey it rightly to your children?

I hope that these few pages will serve as a starting point for you and your family. This perspective may be brand new for you. That's okay. Remember, **Jesus IS ENOUGH!** A life bent on Christ is a life that will glorify him in all things, even in the painful and powerful realm of sexual sin. Next, I offer you a few different conversation starters for your kids of various ages. Tweak them as you need to.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

WITH THE LITTLE ONES

Conversation One:

Build something with your kid. Literally anything. Make a cake. Build some Legos. Play with Play-Doh. But make something. While doing that, start the conversation this way: "What are we making?" "Look at us being a couple of creators." "That's a pretty good LEGO creation/Play-Doh man/cookie, etc." "What should we do with that after we are done?"

Then suggest something completely ridiculous.

They'll laugh.

So, suggest something else utterly ridiculous.

They'll laugh.

"What do you think we should do with them/it after we are finished?"

"Oh, great suggestion. That makes more sense than my silly ideas."

Then turn the corner.

"Did you know that God was the first creator? He made all the plants, animals, planets, stars, and every speck of sand on every beach in the entire world. He also made you and me. Isn't that cool? And just like we made this LEGO thing/play-dough man/cupcake to enjoy it/smash it/ eat it, you and I were made for a special purpose. God loves us and made us so that we could know Him and love Him too."

Conversation Two:

Get an inkpad, some paper, and crayons or markers. (You want to use your fingerprints and your kid's fingerprints to put "fingerprint people on the paper." Then give your fingerprint arms and legs with crayons, markers, or pens. Make a fingerprint family. Add a fingerprint pet. Make a fingerprint dragon.)

"Let's do some art. Today we are going to make some fingerprint people and perhaps some other cool things as well."

Make the scene. Then take the time to notice: "Your fingerprint looks different than mine. Let's do one more fingerprint and compare yours to mine."

Get clean prints.

"Oh, wow. Look, mine has loops and yours sort of swirls. That's cool. Remember last week when we were making things, and I told you that God made us, too? Did you know that every human being who has ever lived on the planet has had a unique fingerprint, distinct from that of every other person? The loops, swirls, and ridges are always different."

If you have a magnifying glass, examine the prints more closely.

"Isn't it amazing that God made us so that we could know him and love him, but he also made us different than everyone else? That's pretty special. Your fingerprint family and mine share a few things in common, but we are also different due to the unique appearance of our fingerprints. Plus, you have 18 cats and I only have one. Whenever we see our fingerprints, it can help us remember that God made us special."

Conversation Three:

"Hey, look, I made you a snack."

Have something unedible, but with a specific purpose on the plate. A television remote, a hammer, a brush. When they say that it isn't a snack, ask, "Why?"

They will say that it's not food. Grab something from the freezer that needs to be cooked and plop it on the plate. They will protest again.

"But it IS food this time." They will tell you it isn't cooked.

"Oh, let me try again." Then give them a yummy snack. Now you can have the conversation.

"Why wasn't the hammer a snack? What should we use a hammer for? Why wasn't the frozen chicken a snack? What would we need to do to be able to eat it? Why was the last thing a snack? Right. Hammers are tools to hit nails. We DON'T eat hammers. Chicken is for supper, and we have to cook it first. But goldfish, or grapes, or whatever, those make good snacks."

"Do you remember who made us? Do you remember why God made us? Do you remember the cool thing we learned about our fingerprint family? Did you know that just like a hammer/a chicken/and a good snack, God made our bodies for special purposes."

"Why do you think God made our eyes? How about our tongues? How about our hands? Do you think God wants us to use our eyes to look at good things or bad things? What are some good things our eyes could look at? How about bad things?"

"Do you think God wants us to use our tongues to say nice things or mean things? What are some nice things we can say with our tongues? What are some mean things we probably shouldn't say?"

"Do you think God wants us to do good or bad things with our hands? What are some examples of good and bad things?"

"Isn't it cool that God made us, and he made all of our parts with a purpose. It would be silly for me to try to use my ears like eyes or to try to use my feet like hands. All of our parts were made by God, and he has a plan for all of them. Just like a snack is always supposed to be a snack and a hammer is always supposed to be a hammer."

Conversation Four:

"I was trying to remember something today. Maybe you can help me. Do you remember who made us? "

"Oh, that's right. I remember now. God made us all exactly the same, didn't he? We even have the same fingerprints. Wait, is that right?"

"OH, you're right, He made each one of us differently. And all our fingerprints are different. Did he also make things like our eyes, tongues, and hands?"

"That's right. You are so good at this. And he wants us to use our parts for good things and not bad things, right? Now I remember."

"Did you also know that we have private parts? There are parts of our body that everyone can see, like my nose or the top of my head. But we don't show our private parts to everyone. In fact, I don't show my private parts to other people, and I don't get to see other private parts except your mom/dad and you when I give you a bath or help you on the potty. But the rest of the time, our private parts are under our clothes. Just as God made all our other parts for good purposes, He also made our private parts for good purposes, not for bad ones. Most of the time, we use our private parts to go to the bathroom. But we don't let other people see our private parts, and we don't let other people touch our private parts. They have their own private parts, and we have our own private parts."

In this conversation you may mention the seven things from earlier in the booklet. This won't be the end of the discussion about how your child was created by God, to know God, and to be used by God for good things, but it is a start.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

WITH KIDS IN ELEMENTARY

Conversation One:

"Do you remember who created you and me? Do you remember why? (Hopefully, you've been reiterating these truths.) Do you remember the fact about the fingerprints? And why did God make each of our body parts? That's right, to be used for good. When we talk about doing good for God, what we usually say is, 'I want to glorify God.' You may have heard us talk about that or sing about that at church. Do you have any guesses what it means to glorify God?"

"Those are great guesses. Who is your best friend? Tell me about them? What is your favorite thing about them? What are they good at? Why do you like to hang out with them? What is your favorite thing to do with them? Okay, everything you just told me is sort of like glorifying your friend. You are telling me all about them, telling me why you love them, telling me what your favorite thing about them is. Because they are your best friend, do you want to do nice things for them or mean things for them?"

Conversation One Continued:

"Nice things, sure. You might want to buy them a birthday present, or share a cookie with them, or even have them come over to the house to play. When we love God, we want to tell people all about him, and we want to be around him, and we want to learn more about him, and we also want to do good things for him. When we tell other people about God, when we worship him, when we read our Bibles, or when we serve him, we are glorifying him. We are sort of making him famous by how we live and talk about him."

"You were made by God, to know God, to love God, and to glorify God. Do you have any questions about that?"

"Good visit. Let's talk more about this next week."

Conversation Two:

"Remember last week when we talked about glorifying God? Do you remember what it means to glorify God?"

"That's right, it is sort of like making him famous by the way we love him and serve him. When you were really little, we talked to you about using your hands and your words to honor God. We still talk about it sometimes, don't we? We also used to discuss privacy with you. You've been giving yourself a bath for a while now. You don't need my help anymore. Now you are even more private than you were when you were a baby or a toddler, potty training. Did you know/remember that boys and girls have different parts? Remember when we got/saw/played with that puppy or kitten? There was a female cat and a male cat. The two of those mated and the mother got pregnant and had kittens. The same happens with elephants, zebras, lions, dogs, hamsters, etc. Any questions?"

"The same happens with your mom and dad. Moms and Dads have different parts and they mate too, but we call it sex, and moms sometimes get pregnant, and that's how you and your siblings came along. Did you know that is exactly how God meant for it to be? In Genesis chapter 1, God made Adam and Eve to be husband and wife and to have kids. The Bible tells us in Genesis 2 that Adam and Eve were naked together and weren't embarrassed at all. That's because they were husband and wife. A husband and wife don't have to be private around each other. God made them to take care of each other and to be able to have sex so that they could have a family. But I wouldn't want to be naked at the restaurant we were at the other day. That would be embarrassing. Or imagine if we went to the grocery store naked, that would be humiliating. But it isn't embarrassing or humiliating to be naked with the person you're married to. And it wasn't embarrassing for you when you were a baby and I had to change your diaper or bathe you. That was just part of me caring for you. But I don't do that anymore, because you take care of yourself now. So, moms and dads can be naked and not embarrassed with each other, because for a mom and a dad, that completely glorifies God, because God made moms and dads for that purpose. But you are in 3rd grade, etc, and God didn't make you to be naked with someone else, did he? That would be embarrassing. If you're hurt and need my help, or if we have to go see the doctor for something, then you might have to be naked, but that's what a doctor is for, so that isn't embarrassing (not too bad anyways) and it still glorifies God. "

"I know this is an awkward conversation, but it is important you know these things. Any questions?"

"Let's talk about it more another time."

Conversation Three:

Remember last week when we were talking about how a mom and dad can be naked together and can have sex, and that glorifies God because it was how and why he made the mom and dad? Do you have any follow-up questions about that?"

"Do you ever hear anyone talk about sex at school or when you are with your friends?"

"Has anyone ever made you feel uncomfortable or tried to touch you in places that we are meant to keep private?"

"Why do you think it is okay for a mom and dad to be naked together? Why do you think it is okay for a mom and dad to have sex?"

Should people who aren't married be naked together?

Should people who aren't married to each other be having sex?"

"Do you have any conversations about your body or about sex?"

Conversation Four:

"Have you thought of any questions you might have for me about what we've discussed over the last few weeks?"

"Okay, well, I want to tell you one more thing. In our world, sex can be used to glorify God, or it can be used to dishonor God. Do you remember what it means to glorify God? What do you think it might mean if we dishonored God? Before Adam and Eve had sinned, when God first created them, he made them naked; they were together as husband and wife, and they "felt no shame." That was God's purpose. The Bible tells us that they had sex and that through sex, God made them into one person. Now, obviously, your mother/father and I aren't physically one person, but God tells the husband and wife that when they have sex, it makes them spiritually into one person. They now have the job to love each other and take care of each other forever."

"I love being your parent and raising you, but one day you will leave us and go out and do life on your own, and probably get married and have a family. I will always do everything in my power to help you and love you, but it won't be my job to take care of you forever. But your mom/dad and I are connected for as long as we live, and we are supposed to show each other the love of God and take care of one another. Sex is what joins us together."

"Remember last time we talked about how sex is for the purpose of having a family, but now we see it is also so that the mom and dad can be joined together. Sex is a special gift from God to a husband and wife to join them together. It is a covenant, which is like a promise you will never break, to be together and take care of each other."

"But sex isn't a gift for anyone to use with anybody. It is only meant for a husband and wife. When sex is between a husband and a wife, it can glorify God, but when it is not between a married couple, it just doesn't glorify God."

"I don't know what the kids at school will talk about or what someone might try to show you, but just remember that sex, and our private parts, are meant to glorify God as a special gift for a husband and wife. It isn't right for someone who isn't your spouse to have sex with you, or touch you in a place that we consider private."

"If anyone tries to show you things or talk to you about things like sex, you should tell me immediately. That isn't okay. We can't control what other people do, but you and I can decide that we always want to honor God with our bodies."

"Any questions? Just know you are always welcome to ask me questions anytime, and I will do what I can to answer them well."

CONVERSATION STARTERS

WITH KIDS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Since you have hopefully already laid the foundation by this point, these conversations can become more pointed. If you are just now starting these conversations with your middle school children, then see the pointers from the "littles" and the "elementary kids" and adjust them as necessary to convey the truth.

Conversation One:

"Ever since you were little, we have talked to you about your body being made by God for the glory of God. Now you are at the age where you are probably noticing the opposite sex more, your body has gone and is going through changes, and unfortunately, it will get more awkward before it gets better. Do you have any specific questions about sex, dating, or what's going on in your body?"

"A lot of Christians treat sex like it is something shameful to avoid. It isn't that at all. Sex was created by God to be enjoyed. It's just that God has a specific purpose and a specific situation in mind. Sex is a gift for a married couple. Outside of that boundary, sex doesn't honor God. We've told you for years that our lives were made to know and love God. That doesn't change as we get older."

Conversation One Continued:

"Do you understand the difference between Law and Grace? Let's talk about our identity in Christ. Did you know that when we come to put faith in Jesus, we are made fully righteous and holy, and God completely loves us? Even if we do something that dishonors God, we are still considered righteous because you and I, as Christians, now have the righteousness of Jesus. That doesn't mean we should do whatever we want since God won't be mad at us. We are still created and saved for the glory of God. That should be our purpose."

"Most Christians think that if we give our kids enough rules, then we can keep them safe from sin. But that has never worked. I'm not interested in giving you the rules to keep you safe, I want you to know that Jesus loves you, and I want to help you love Jesus. When we understand how much Jesus loves us, and when we love him well, we find that we will glorify God."

"Look up Galatians 5:16 and let's read it."

"What do you think that means?"

"Let's look up 1 John 4:19."

"What do you think that means?"

"So we don't avoid sex outside of marriage because it is 'sinful', we avoid it because we desire to love and glorify God, and he has a purpose for sex. Now, instead of it being something I'm ashamed about, I can think of sex as something holy I want to guard for marriage. Something I want you to treat as holy and guard until marriage."

"Any questions about why we want to glorify God in this way? Any other questions?"

Conversation Two:

"I want to talk to you today about pornography. Pornography is sexual content in the form of pictures or videos that show people naked or close to naked, and often it shows pictures of people engaging in sexual acts."

"Pornography does not honor God. We can not engage in the observation of pornography and glorify God at the same time."

(At this point, I would discuss the Theology of Sex section on pornography and go over the four talking points mentioned above in the section on how to start the conversation with your middle school students.)

"Has anyone shown you anything that would constitute pornography? Has anyone shown you any pictures or videos that don't glorify and honor God? Have you been looking at anything on your phone or computer that does not glorify God? Do you need help getting away from pornography?"

"Let's pray that God would guard your eyes and mind from porn, OR let's ask God to help you glorify him in the future so this won't keep coming back up."

Conversation Three:

"What is the biblical purpose of sex?"

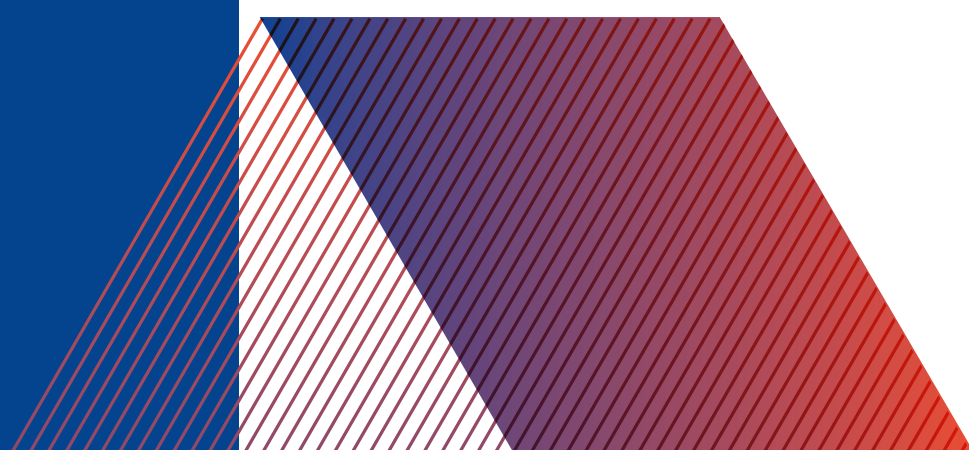
"Is sex a thing to be ashamed of and avoided, or a holy thing to be guarded? How might the correct perspective about sex help us honor God in that particular area of our lives?"

"What is the spiritual problem with porn? If I am using porn, what might that reveal about my relationship with God?" (You should have walked through these concepts with them already)

"Has anyone tried to show you things that don't glorify God? Do you have anything on your device that doesn't glorify God? Are you using your device to look at things or do things that don't glorify God?"

"Do you have any questions for me about sex/pornography or how we honor God?"

"Do you know that I will always love you and do anything in my power to serve you and help you?"



Conversation Four:

"I want you to be careful as you think about or start to date. Remember that sex is a gift for a husband and a wife. Sexual desires aren't sinful. Hunger isn't sinful. But we can honor God or dishonor God in any desire we have. I want to remind you of your identity in Christ. You are a righteous, holy saint. You are loved and cherished by the God of heaven. You are a representative of God in this world. Saved by the blood of Jesus to know and love God. In addition to that, you were made to glorify God and make him famous in your time on the earth."

"When/if you start to date, you will want to hold hands, and that will lead to wanting to kiss, and that will lead to wanting to do things that begin to go into the realm of the gift of sex meant for a husband and wife to share."

"Be wise."

"Make godly choices."

"Remember that sex is a covenant, a promise, making you one with the other person. It is meant to be a blessing in marriage, and rightly enjoyed in marriage, it will absolutely glorify God. But outside of those specific parameters, it does not come from the love of God, but from our own selfish desires."

"And don't waste your time dating or pursuing someone who does not have as their aim to honor Jesus. And never date someone you couldn't see yourself married to one day. There is too much heartbreak and heartache to be had in wasted relationships."

"Surround yourself with friends who also want to honor Jesus."

(Have a discussion about choices and consequences.)

"Any questions?"

"Why do you think it matters the type of person we date, that they love Jesus?"

CONVERSATION STARTERS

WITH KIDS IN HIGH SCHOOL

At this point, hopefully the conversation about honoring God in these ways is such an open dialogue that it doesn't require as much instruction. I am going to approach this section a little bit differently. And as a side note, don't allow your children to be in situations where you know the likelihood of sexual temptation is abundant.

Regular Questions to Ask:

"Are you honoring God?"

"Are you glorifying God in your body?"

"Have you had any exposure to pornography since we last discussed it?"

"Are you and your significant other making choices to correctly represent God in your relationship?"

"Are you honoring God on your device?"

"Do you need me to set any boundaries for you to be helpful to you?"

Regular Questions to Ask Continued:

"How is your relationship with God?"

"What have you been learning about God lately?"

"What has been sticking out to you in church recently?"

"Do you have any questions for me?"

"Do you need my help in any area of your life?"

"Do you feel loved here at home?"

"Do you feel safe here at home?"

"Do you know that you are loved by the God of heaven?"

Regular Things to Remind Them of:

Go back to the basics.

"Why were we created?"

"All of our parts are created for the glory of God."

"By faith we are completely righteous and Holy in the sight of God. This isn't an excuse to walk in disobedience, but rather an opportunity and power to walk in holiness before God."

"Sex isn't a shameful thing we avoid, but a holy thing we guard. Are you guarding sex as holy?"

"You are loved."

"Your choices matter. Good choices won't make God love you more, bad choices won't make God love you less, but the consequences may follow us for a long time, and we must be bent on the aim of glorifying God."

"God's ways are best."

"Living for the glory of God is the most satisfying way to live."

"Everything we do represents Christ. It either represents him correctly or incorrectly."

Revisit the "Theology of Sex":

Help your high schooler understand the spiritual implications of sexual disobedience. Please help them to remember that they are not first physical people, but spiritual people in a physical body.

"This flesh and blood body we live in, the desires (good and bad) we have are all temporary. It is our eternal soul/spirit that endures. 'Flesh and blood don't inherit the kingdom of heaven.' So then, son/daughter, we live for the eternal and not the temporary."

Hebrews 11:24-26. Moses chose Jesus over the passing pleasures of sin. Sin may very well be pleasurable, but it is a passing pleasure, and Christ has pleasures that last forever. See Psalm 16:11. We must help our young people understand that we are part of the Kingdom of God. We are eternal beings in temporary shells. We must live then for the things that last forever rather than for the temporary things.

At this point, if you haven't already, you should be laying out for them the theology of knowing and loving God. I highly recommend you share the first part of this booklet with them.

Revisit the Theology of Sexual Sin:

I honestly don't think there is a single component of this conversation from "littles" to "high school" that isn't worth repeating.

Be careful not to set the standard of rules and laws for your students. The difficulty in setting the rules and laws as a standard for holy living is that you will constantly have to add more rules and laws to safeguard them from sin, and the rules and laws can't actually keep them on the straight and narrow.

Don't ask questions like, "Did you sin?" We have an uncanny ability to justify our behavior in our minds and think that maybe what we did wasn't so bad after all. Instead, ask, "Are you honoring God? Are you glorifying God? Are you correctly representing God?" These questions get to the heart of the aim of our lives to be lived out according to the beauty of the gospel.

Don't be ashamed or embarrassed to have conversations with your kids about these topics. Instead, have as your aim to guard them from choices that dishonor the Lord. Shape the perspective they have of Jesus rightly.

And then repeat.

And repeat again.

And cover them in prayer and with the grace of Jesus and the richness of your love for them.

And then repeat these things all over again.

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