

first steps

HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR KIDS ABOUT SEX

*HELP! HOW DO I
TALK TO MY KIDS
ABOUT SEX?*

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How To Have The Birds And The Bees Talk With Your Kids.

As you prepare to have this critical conversation, your heart will likely be filled with fear. In that moment, you must be courageous. Someone once said that courage is not the absence of fear, but it is choosing to act in spite of the fear. Walk in confidence knowing that God wants you to lovingly share this information with your children. More importantly, know that He is with you.

In the Years Leading Up to "The Talk"

How our children receive the message we give them about sex is, in many ways, closely tied to the positive foundation we lay in the years leading up to it. For those parents who feel that their children are not quite ready yet, there are several things that we can focus on. First of all, we must be sure to model a healthy relationship in our

marriages. The security we give our children will be greatly based upon the love that they sense between mom and dad. When the time comes to describe what happens in the sexual act, and we insist that it is a beautiful, wonderful act of love that mom and dad share, the confidence they have in our relationship may determine how they respond to our message. Even single parents can present this truth in the context of how God designed things to be. Secondly, we must be diligent to protect our children's innocence. Unfortunately, there are a million different ways for our kids to get information about sex than from us. The average age of first-time exposure to pornography is getting younger every year. We must also give attention to the sexual awareness of our children's peers. Kids talk openly (and often with braggadocio) about what they know, so we must stay in good communication with other parents and our children's teachers about what they might be

hearing. We cannot afford to be lazy in this area. Third, parents should look for signs that their children are ready for "the talk." Some questions to consider include:

- What are their natural curiosities?
- What questions are they asking?
- What are they being exposed to outside the home?
- In addition to their chronological age, what is their emotional age?
- What can they handle?

Finally, parents must seek God's leadership in all aspects of parenting, but particularly as it relates to this specific conversation. While friends and family might provide us with some wisdom and encouragement, only God fully knows and understands the heart of each individual child. As Isaiah 30:21 says, only He can lead His disciples to hear His voice say, "This is the way, walk in it." We must ask God to give us conviction through His Holy Spirit regarding when we are to speak to our children about sex.

Having "The Talk"

There is no "silver bullet" process or solution for making this painless and stress-free, but there are some guidelines to consider.

1. Get prayed up. As the days lead up to your conversation, ask friends who

know your family well to be interceding for you. You must trust that God WILL walk this out with you, preparing your child (His child) for what you will tell him or her.

2. Dads talk to sons; moms talk to daughters. While there are some cases where single parents may need to cross gender lines, a general rule should be that dads talk with sons and moms talk with daughters. Once the truth is out there and the ice has been broken, the other parent can share their perspective at a later date.
3. Practice before you preach. It helps if you talk out what you plan to say with your spouse or with another good friend. If possible, practice with someone who has already had the conversation with his or her kids. They may be a good source of advice regarding lessons learned and land mines to avoid.
4. Build it into a fun "coming of age" event. Our tradition is to take our kids on a road trip for a few days, building lots of "you're growing up" conversations into our time. "The talk" is included in the middle of many other things, as it is an essential thing that every young person needs to know.
5. Start talking. At some point, you have to jump in there and get the conversation started. It will feel awkward, but that's normal. To get

the ball rolling, I always started with something like this: "As you get older, I need to tell you about something that every young man and woman needs to know. I've been praying about this and I think it's about time I told you."

6. Keep it age-appropriate. Strive to share some basic things, but you don't need to share everything at the front end. If the relationship is solid and you can make it comfortable for them, their deeper questions will continue to trickle in over time. Also, try not to be confusing with your language. If you tell your 6-year-old that Mommy has an egg inside of her, he will never look at an omelet the same way again.
7. Use available resources. There are a number of great tools out there to help parents through this process. Instead of providing a script here, I encourage you to seek out those resources. Steve Farrar's example in Point Man was very helpful for me. The bottom line is that you don't have to go it alone. These books are also a good idea because you can store them in a place where your kids can easily get to them. Encourage your kids to look at them on their own.
8. Be positive! Through everything you do, your goal is to communicate to your child that the sexual facet of humanity is a good thing. They may

not believe it at first (in fact, they are likely to think you are absolutely crazy), but your reassurance that sex is wonderful will go a long way to giving them a good first-impression of it, even if they don't fully get it.

9. Ask for a response. A good question is: "What do you think about all this?" Don't be surprised or worried if the shock of the whole thing leads them to some quiet contemplation. One dad told me his son responded with, "I could have gone the rest of my life without hearing that."
10. Put everything in the right context: marriage. Though this is probably the first time they will have heard about sex, it most certainly will not be the last. Stress from the earliest point possible that God designed sexuality to be expressed exclusively between two people who are fully committed to one another. Anything less than that has the real potential to compromise relationships and cheapen true intimacy.

Once your kids are fully aware of this unique and bizarre thing that married people do to express their love for one another, it is important that you consistently put sex in a positive light. As your kids get older and are bombarded with the world's perspective of sex with no consequences, you might be tempted to counteract that message with another

extreme that is equally unhealthy. Let me explain:

While many parents fail their kids by allowing them to explore relationships and their sexuality with no parameters, some parents fail them in another way. These well-meaning parents bombard their teenagers with a variety of messages that all say the same thing. "Sex is bad. Don't do it. It's dangerous. Those sexual feelings and desires are evil, so suppress them at all costs." These messages are both wrong and dangerous. Above anything else, the most important thing parents can communicate to their kids is that sex is an amazing gift from God. It is beautiful and should be celebrated and honored.

We have an unwritten rule at our house that we want to gross out our kids at least once a week by our shows of physical affection. While the thought of their parents being intimate may make their stomachs turn, it does affirm for them that intimacy is a highly valued part of our marriage relationship.

After The Talk

In the days (and even years) after having the talk, you need to make yourself available to discuss things further. Once you broach the subject and your child knows what happens during sex, you need to give them some time to process and to develop some questions. The key is to let them know that you will always tell them the truth. You should also

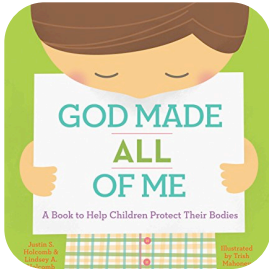
inform your kids that their friends don't know anything and that you are a far better source of information than their peers are.

Difficult as it might seem, I want to assure every parent that they have what it takes to do this. Scary or uncomfortable as it may be, parents have stumbled through this conversation for thousands of years and our species has flourished. The fact that you are chewing on these issues in the context of this book proves that you are better prepared than the vast majority of parents out there. Jenifer and I would love to cheer you on (picture Will Ferrell's Spartan cheerleader sketches) to boldly tackle these issues at home and reject passivity as an option.

More than that, I encourage you to remember that there is a God who loves you, who loves your children, and who walks with you through all things. If He wants you to lovingly have this conversation with your kids (and He does), then when the time is right, He will be there to give you His peace and the right words to say. The awesome part of that is that I don't have to dress up like a cheerleader.

Johnson, Barrett. *The Talks: A Parent's Guide to Critical Conversations about Sex, Dating, and Other Unmentionables* (pp. 68-72). Kindle Edition.

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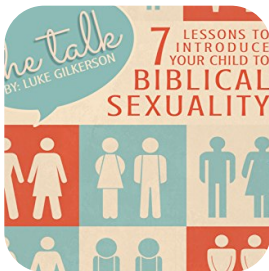
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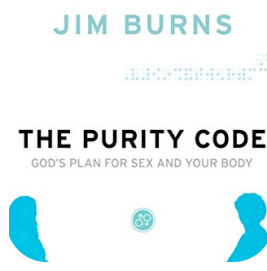
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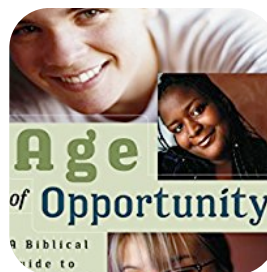
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