

Talking to Your Kids About Sex

by Jim Burns, Ph.D.

When it comes to teenage sexuality, there's good news and bad news. The good news is even though they are in the minority, thousands of teenagers are taking seriously the biblical mandate to refrain from sexual intercourse until marriage. The bad news is that far too few parents are stepping up as the primary influence in their children's sex education.

Studies tell us that only 10 to 15 percent of junior high and high school students receive positive, healthy, value-centered sex education at home. I recently spoke to 400 parents on the subject of teaching our children about sex. I asked the parents, "How many of you received positive, healthy sex education at home?" Eight people raised their hands! They hadn't received sex education from their parents and they were passing that silence on to the next generation.

Most young people base their decisions about sexual activity on three factors. The first is good old *peer pressure*. When a teenager lacks a strong moral and spiritual base, the pressure to conform to the world's standards is just too strong. Few of us have strong moral fiber innately built into us. Someone has to take the time—sometimes lots of time—to instill a child with a sense of morality.

The second factor is *emotional neediness*. Show me a young person with a low view of themselves and an extreme desire to be accepted by their peers and you have a young person who can be fooled into instant intimacy and easily seduced sexually.

Studies on both the liberal and conservative side of sex education tell us that kids often make sexual decisions based on a lack of *information*. Today's young people are bombarded with hundreds of sexual images a day. Yet Christian parents often spend too much time telling their kids that sex can lead to AIDS or pregnancy and far too little time helping their teens understand their sexuality from a healthy, biblical perspective.

Our best defense against these three factors is God's Word. Lay a spiritual foundation for sexual purity early and reinforce it often. Teach a biblical view of sexuality that helps your kids understand that God created our sexuality and sees it as very good (Genesis 2:18-25; Genesis 1:26,27). Help them understand that the reason God gives strong instruction on the sins of adultery and fornication is because he wants the best for his children and their future marriages (Exodus 20:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Don't be afraid to challenge your kids with the powerful words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, which teaches us that we are to refrain from sexual immorality because our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and we are to honor God with our bodies. Parents must talk about all of the issues of sexuality with their children, but they can't miss providing the spiritual foundation that will ultimately produce the fruit of purity in their children's lives.

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