

7 Tips

FOR TALKING
ABOUT SEXUALITY
WITH YOUR CHILDREN



Conversations about
JESUS, SEX & GENDER

→ Questions about sex, sexuality and gender have become some of the most pressing ethical questions facing the home today, and your children especially are swimming in the deep end of these topics. Your leadership and facilitation as a parent are incredibly important.

Discipling your kids in this topic is not easy. It's uncomfortable. It's nerve-wracking. And the world your kids are growing up in is drastically different from the world you grew up in. They're being faced with questions and ideas and relationships that didn't seem to exist 20 or 30 years ago.

Some of the greatest challenges for a parent are the conversations surrounding sexuality and gender. But you must understand one TRUTH, it's probably the one thing you need to hear more than any other - YOUR VOICE MATTERS! And it needs to be included in this dialogue.

These are crucial questions directly related to your children's spiritual growth and they are being bombarded with alternative and destructive views on these topics every single day. Plus, the church rarely has good, honest, gospel-centered discussions about these topics. Especially if you include topics like porn, masturbation, same-sex attraction, or transgender identities. It's no longer just a conversation about not having sex before marriage.

Unfortunately, your kids are getting a sex education from somewhere whether we want them to or not. So, rather than pretending like we can (or even should) shelter them, we should educate them in God's design for sex in a healthy and God-honoring way.

**So, what could a talk on
sexuality look like in your home?
Here are seven tips on how
to begin engaging these
conversations with your children.**



1

Your children need to know God loves them.

God's love for us is foundational. All obedience, all of our sexual integrity, is a response to God's prior love for us. And we need to drive this home for our children. If all they do is "remain virgins until their married," then we've failed. I mean, that's a good thing, but we're not saved by sexual purity, but by the purifying work of Christ. He is our foundation. Knowing God loves them is paramount to the entirety of this conversation.

This is also why we advocate for using the term **sexual integrity rather than sexuality purity**. The term sexual purity has a lot of baggage associated with it. For too long this term has been associated

more with behavior modification or sin management, than the transformational work of Christ in our lives. Unfortunately, this has reduced "Christian sex" to simply choosing to wait for sex until marriage...to remain a virgin.

But we must understand, sex is not just physical. It is emotional, social, and spiritual. **Sexual integrity** is about having a holistic view of sex. It requires more than just self-willed behavior. It requires turning to the Lord with all our hearts and being empowered by the Holy Spirit to obey. Sexual Integrity is about saying "YES!" to living a faithful, flourishing life as a sexual being according to how God has designed you.

2

Embrace the awkwardness.

As a parent, who chooses to engage in these conversations, you will need to become comfortable in the awkward tension. Sometimes anxiety can get in the way of having some of the most important dialogue with your kids. But don't let it stop you!

Many adults will feel uncomfortable talking about the topics of sex, sexuality, and gender due to the sensitive nature of each discussion. Maybe it is because you didn't have a chance to discuss these topics when you were younger. Maybe it is because you've always thought this conversation should remain private. Or maybe you have not dealt with shame from your own sexual

brokenness. This is something all of us at some point need to face. Whatever the reason, you have a responsibility to help your children engage this conversation.

One thing that might also help: if possible, practice having these conversations with your spouse or other trusted adults before ever having them with your children. Also, as you prepare for these conversations, become a trustworthy guide for your kids. Listen to what they say about the culture. Specifically, pay attention to the conversations they might have with friends surrounding these topics. By doing so, you'll be able to better help your children navigate their own experiences.

3

No topic is off limits.

Don't shy away from the difficult subjects. It is incredibly important to create spaces that are safe for your kid to discuss anything. And this is not just something you say – it has to be modeled day in and day out. Your posture will be just as important as what you communicate. Sometimes HOW we believe is just as influential for your kids as WHAT we believe.

Also, your kids will know if you're giving them cliched answers to complex questions. If you're going to be available for any conversation then make sure you are honest and respectful. And if you don't know the answer one of the best things you can say is, "I don't know but let's find out together!" This creates a communal spirit and shows you are willing to walk alongside your child in their search for answers. Humility and an openness to learn builds credibility with this generation.

Please understand, your kids are going to want answers to more than just how far they can go sexually with a boyfriend or girlfriend. As you

probably already know youth are struggling with a variety of issues surrounding sex, sexuality, and gender. They may have questions about sex: how far is too far, or what exactly is considered sex? They might also have questions about their sexual orientation or their gender identity. Being available and willing to engage in each of these conversations will be important.

And let's not forget – the Church hasn't always done well in the conversations surrounding LGBTQ identities. Please remember, most youth probably have LGBTQ friends and have been unimpressed with how the church has treated LGBTQ people. Or they might be struggling with their own sexuality. Parents who don't address LGBTQ related questions will come off as tone-deaf to the conversation. And if our children see their parents as tone deaf, your theological position will lose credibility. This is why it will be important to begin sexuality talks with a posture of humility and repentance; you will want to first humanize the conversation before getting into Scripture.

4

One conversation is not enough!

Helping your children align their sexual lives with the creator's plan is one of the greatest opportunities you have as a parent.

And the good news is that it doesn't need to happen in ONE talk. It can (and should) happen over many years and many different talks.

These are not conversations that you need to force. Allow your children to control the pace and rhythm with which they move the dialogue. One child might ask you about sex at 8 while the other doesn't ask anything until 9. As you become the expert of your children you will learn how to move the conversation forward.

But this doesn't happen in just one - 100 minute talk. Rather it happens over 100-one minute talks. This gives them time to digest the information. It also gives you time to prepare for each and every conversation that lies ahead.

And don't be surprised if your children know more than you or at least sounds like they do by using new terms or talking about identities you've never heard of. Generation Z, your kids, will not have a lack of resources when it comes to this subject. That is why you must be the first and last place they seek information. Become Google to your children when it comes to the topics of sex, sexuality, and gender. This means becoming a student long before your children ever do by studying recent trends and what other youth are asking long before your kids ever ask you.

Unfortunately, parents incorrectly assume they are giving enough information to their teens. In one study, 90 percent of parents reported having had a conversation about sex with their teen. However, nearly 4 in 10 teens say they have never discussed sex or sexuality with their parents.

Don't let this be you. Start the conversation if you haven't already and keep it alive all throughout their life.

5

Cultivate a passion for both TRUTH and GRACE.

We need to have a love for what scripture says about sex, sexuality, and gender. This means having a desire to seek TRUTH and understand God's divine plan for sex. Recognizing that God is the creator and author of all. It also means extending GRACE in everything that we do and say.

Most youth will get the grace part of this conversation. Many of them extend 'grace' to friends who are habitually looking at porn or are having sex. It's also common for youth to only emphasize grace when discussing LGBTQ related questions. The unfortunate reality is often these conversations are one-sided. Emphasizing grace but with no truth. Or, all truth with no grace. But your children need to hear both!

Your children need to understand what the Bible says about sex, sexuality, and gender. This means you need to study Scripture. Learn to love what it reveals. You need to be a student of Scripture so you can share its truths with your children.

But as you learn the Bible's truths you will also learn of the grace, the incredible grace given and received throughout the gospel. Youth need to know they can love their friend caught in sexual sin - or themselves - as God's precious children. By being committed to following what the Bible says about grace and forgiveness they also learn his wonderful and divine plan for sex.

6

We need to discuss shame and forgiveness.

So many youth are hooked on porn, habitually masturbating, or having sex outside of marriage. These experiences along with several others can produce shame in the lives of Christians. This shame can then prevent them from truly engaging in conversations about sex, sexuality, and gender in healthy ways.

Communicating God's forgiveness and also teaching your children to forgive themselves will be important, except in instances of abuse where a victim can treat themselves with contempt because they wrongly believe the abuse was their fault. For those who have been sexually abused, taking a step toward freedom from shame won't occur unless someone walks with them in their pain and confusion.

This means you must listen, listen, listen. This may be the first time they've ever

shared this story. It is incredibly vulnerable so honor that moment with your time and patience. Be sure to also communicate that this was not their fault. Often someone who has been abused can think they are responsible for the choice that was stolen from them. That is simply not true!

Helping your children feel comfortable and "not alone" in their shame will be important. Once they expose their shame to the light, they can start to find healing through community and ultimately through Jesus Christ. Oftentimes we see that shame drives us into isolation, but healing comes through a group of committed friends and mentors who draw us out and love on us as Jesus would. And there is no one more important in this process than YOU as a parent!

7

Talk about singleness as much or more as you talk about marriage.

Sometimes our focus on marriage can make an idol out of it. As parents, we need to promote a biblical understanding of marriage. And the Bible does not promise that everyone will or should get married. So when you say things like, “WHEN you get married...” we’re not promoting a biblical view of marriage. Marriage is a good and beautiful vocation that some (perhaps many) are called to. And so is singleness.

Instead of saying “when you get married...” we should follow the biblical view of marriage by saying “if God calls you to marriage...” When we assume everyone should or will get married, we unintentionally devalue singleness.

Please understand, your kids are going to wait longer, most likely, than any other generation to get married (if they do get married). This means they will live a much longer life being single than past

generations. The average age of marriage in the 1950’s was 21. Today the average age is 29. For some of your children that is a WHOLE other lifetime. So you need to promote the truth that singleness is not just a stage to get through, but as a gift and calling to take advantage of even if it is only for a season.

To be blunt, if you or your church communicates that marriage is the end-goal of life, or that singleness is a miserable existence, then the biblical point of marriage will be lost. If you’re married, be honest about the tough parts of your marriage. If you only talk about the good parts of your marriage, your children will not have a realistic picture of marriage. And, if you’re single, then help them see the blessings of singleness. Don’t pass over the hard stuff either. All stages of life come with difficulties and your children need to know this!

Need more help?

Be sure to check out the **Christian Sexuality series** from *The Center for Faith, Sexuality & Gender* and *Project Six19*. The series' mission is to faithfully present God's design for our bodies and to follow the Bible's teachings with regard to our sexual desires.

It includes **12 youth videos, 12 mentor videos and dozens of extra resources** to help make your talk on sex, sexuality, and gender the best one possible.



TOPICS UNPACKED IN THE SERIES:

God's Lovestory
The Authority of God and Scripture
Shame and Forgiveness
Sex and Marriage
Porn and Masturbation
Same-Sex Sexuality
Transgender Identities
LGBTQ Questions
Dating and Friendships
Sex in the iWorld
Following Jesus in a Sexualized Age

www.christian-sexuality.com



CHRISTIAN
SEXUALITY