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## Shaping Your Child's Sexual Character



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# Shaping Your Child's Sexual Character

As a parent there are few topics more unsettling to discuss with your child than sex. There are often many questions that arise for both parent and child when it comes to this topic. Finding the right answers often starts with asking the right questions. This outline attempts to identify important questions that parents need to consider when thinking about shaping their child's sexual character. The questions are meant to encourage parents to seek a blend of appreciation and urgency to tackle this topic with sound assurance. It is helpful when parents can be united and clear on the 5 W's below.

1. **Who** accepts the responsibility for teaching children about sexual character according to the Bible?
2. **What** are they being told?
3. **When** should talking with children occur?
4. **Where** do parents begin?
5. **Why** do we want children to have an accurate understanding of God's design for their sexual character?

## **WHO: Who should be teaching our children about this topic? Should it be other children, churches or schools, or the cultural media influences?**

It is important to acknowledge that your children are learning about their physical development and physical intimacy. They are also being educated about what their bodies have been designed for. There is no doubt that your child will become educated about his or her sexuality. The question is, what is a parent's role in this educational process? The Bible is clear about parents being in the lead of training and instructing their children's lives. This topic is too important for parents to be silent about. Parents have been given the responsibility and opportunity to lay a biblical foundation of truth for their children in all areas of life including God's design for their bodies.

## **WHAT: What are children being taught today?**

After deciding to teach your child about God's design for sex, the following questions are important to consider. Take a moment to read and discuss these questions with your spouse. When you come to a question you are not sure how to answer, prayerfully consider direction from the Word and reach out to others who can offer support and guidance.

- What do we want our children to know?
- What is God's design for their bodies?
- What are children possibly hearing from others?
- What are the possible consequences when children don't know about their bodies or the boundaries needed to protect their bodies and hearts?
- What do we want to teach our children to do if they are touched/talked to in a sexually inappropriate way?

## **WHEN: When is the appropriate age to talk to children about sex?**

The following scenario reveals some natural tendencies of children and adults. When a child wants information or displays natural curiosity about how things work and the physical design/purpose of his body, the parents usually say "not now" or "just wait" to their request and inquiry. However, later when parents want to discuss these matters, their child says no because he may be embarrassed, disgusted, amused, etc.

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When is the appropriate age to have the “talk” with my child? This question – which is easy to ask – sadly misses the deeper teaching opportunity. It’s not about waiting to find that magical age – it’s about knowing a child’s maturity/developmental level and using appropriate language with appropriate content that matches his level of understanding. Most learning done by children is built on progression. Simpler concepts and ideas are established as the foundation for additional principles and applications. Instilling the concept of Biblical design for their sexual character should be of utmost priority. It would be wise to approach this parental responsibility from a developmental lifespan model of sex education rather than one big “birds and bees” conversation. This approach is rooted in the process of information being shared over time and not just having a single conversation.

The best time to start this developmental approach is RIGHT NOW. A very helpful series of 4 books written by Stan and Brenda Jones will help give parents seeking information a place to start. Book 1 (ages 3-5) helps lay the foundation for how God created male and female to be different. Book 2 (ages 5-8) helps lay the foundation of age-appropriate terms and language. Book 3 (ages 8-11) helps lay the foundation for understanding the basics of sex and procreation. Book 4 (ages 11-14) helps lay the foundation of the role of puberty and the joy of marriage. These books are listed at the end of this document.

## **WHERE: Where do we begin?**

This is more than just finding a private place to talk. Teaching children about healthy sexuality is an area where few parents seem to have confidence. One of the first challenges pivots on knowing how to bring up the topic of healthy sexuality. The Bible is certainly not lacking in examples that can lay the groundwork for current and future conversation. Lot’s daughters, Joseph and Potiphar’s wife, Tamar, David and Bathsheba, the fool in *Proverbs 5*, the adulterous woman brought before Christ, and the woman at the well are all deep in meaning regarding the significance of sexual character.

*Titus 2* also reminds us of the blessing of tapping into the resource of older parents/grandparents/mentors. Seeking the wisdom from those who have been there can also provide parents with some insight and encouragement.

A final element to consider regarding “where do we begin” is never to forget that the core of this conversation process is relationships. Having an established relationship built with our children certainly helps in easing open the door of opportunity to talk and share about this topic. If children feel comfortable talking with parents about the small things, this then creates those opportunities for sharing about the big things.

## **WHY: Why is this topic so important?**

Even from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden, God has created a special bond between man and woman under the blessing of marriage. Families, churches and societies are all enhanced when that core marital bond is functioning healthily. Helping ensure that our children enter that stage of life with sound truths and limited hurt is a great motivation for answering some of the “why” questions.

- Why is it important that you are your children’s first teacher?
- Why is it important for them to know that God has designed their bodies?
- Why is it important for them to think ahead of their future spouses?
- Why does God want them to be grounded in their sexual character?

The most powerful answer to “why” is that it fulfills God’s command for parents to “train up their children” (*Prov. 22:6*), “teach them diligently” (*Deut. 6:7*), and “not prompt undue frustration/anger” (*Col. 3:21*).

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**NEXT STEP: Discussing and thinking about the 5 W's should lead to a reasonable next question: HOW do parents do all that?**

As this topic can stretch some parents out of their comfort zone or even bring back hurtful memories for some, it is always wise to remember the basics: 1) pray for wisdom and courage, 2) look to the Bible for truth and direction, and 3) strive for parental unity for support and consistency. Connecting with appropriate materials/resources can also be helpful to parents desiring to shape their child's sexual character according to biblical truth.

A very helpful book series is available that can help provide materials for parents as they teach their child about God's design for sex. Authors Stan and Brenna Jones have created the following set of biblically based books regarding this topic.

Parent's Guide: *How and When to Tell Your Kids About Sex* (God's Design for Sex Series)

Book 1: *The Story of Me* (ages 3-5)

Book 2: *Before I Was Born* (ages 5-8)

Book 3: *What's the Big Deal* (ages 8-11)

Book 4: *Facing the Facts* (11-14)

This series builds on the developmental stages of children and provides the spiritual foundation for answering many of the 5 W's. The progressive content format allows parents to have many conversations with their children that are distributed over multiple years. This powerful teaching resource will assist parents in fulfilling *Prov. 1:8-9*, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." A father and mother's gentle presentation of God's design of the human body and physical intimacy will bless their children by taking the uncomfortable but important step of teaching God's design for sex.

