

HOW TO GIVE A
SEX
TALK

BONUS EBOOK

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LPC

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The talk. It's iconic in our culture, a rite of passage, the threshold moment we pass into the realm of the secret knowledge of sex. But it's nearly a lost art, a bygone ritual. Take John's story. I met John on a trip to the mountains last fall. Our family stayed in one of those timeshare resorts—you might know the type—where you suffer the hour-long sales pitch to get a discount. Thankfully, John, our sales guy, was friendly enough and seemed like an actual human.

When he asked what we do for work, I mentioned I am a therapist and author. He, of course, asked what I'd written, and I said I had a book coming out soon called *The Sex Talk You Never Got*.

“Wow, that ought to sell well. I didn't get a sex talk,” he said without skipping a beat, “and I didn't give a talk to my two sons either.”

Tacked up behind him on his cubicle was a photo of him standing next to two young men, his arms draped over their shoulders. He clearly loved his boys. And yet, he never talked to them about sex, nor did his father with him. And on and on the neglect goes.

Most of us maybe were given a basic anatomy lesson or purity lecture, if we got anything at all. That leaves most young people to figure it out on their own—from friends, movies, Google, porn, or in heartache moments of sexual struggle. These are terrible guides and nowhere near a healthy replacement for good conversation with our parents or trusted caregivers. Nowadays I think more parents are saying something about sex. But studies show the vast majority of young people are leaving home still craving more.¹

Let's be honest: Sex is hard to talk about—no matter your age, your story, or your place in life. It's awkward because it's so personal and bodily and vulnerable. I think this reflects the sacredness of sex. We are the only species to veil our bodies with clothes, much like the holy of holies, as it were, a daily reminder that what we lost in Eden was a world completely safe and free of shame. Ah, the grief that in Adam and Eve, it all fell from original goodness. And yes, while all of us fall short of the glory of God, I don't believe we ever lost that original blessing on our sexuality. Our sexuality still stands as a powerful witness that God created us for deep connection and immense pleasure.

What child doesn't still feel these instincts of Eden to disrobe and streak naked through the house . . . or even Target? Alas, the garden is not where we live. And thereby talking about sexuality is always fraught with the tension of how to cast the vision of what was meant to be while honoring the harsh environment we live within now.

Talking to your son or daughter about sex has a high probability of being awkward—at least at first. But that’s a good thing. It means you’re aware you stand on sacred ground. So, welcome the awkward as the evidence that your heart is carrying the weight of the moment. You will probably struggle with thinking you said too much and too little all at the same time. That feeling will not abate for a while, until you get better at this.

Let me share my best advice right out of the gate for giving a sex talk, which has nothing to do with actually *talking* to your children (not at first, anyway).

From the outset, apart from anything you say to your kids, the best thing you can do for your children is to reflect on your own sexual formation. Face your own sexual story. What shaped you? What harmed you? What were the beautiful and innocent moments, like first kisses or first crushes? What were the shameful or even painful moments, like heartbreaks or porn exposure? And what were the outright traumatic moments, such as abuse or ridicule? Be curious with the awkwardness you feel around sexuality, and let that feeling take you into your own story first and foremost.

We can’t talk about sex without being connected to our bodies. Some topics lend themselves to heady conversations, like algebra or car repairs or taxes (never mind; taxes freak me out). Sex will plunk you square in your body and your story. That’s why facing your own story is actually the beginning of any conversation with your kids. It will free your body and

heart to not simply react (with anxious panic or numbing shutdown) but to stay present enough to respond well to the nuance of conversations on sexuality.

Along with engaging your own sexual formation, if you're married, work on your own romance. As the saying goes, most things are caught, not taught. Your children will be shaped by what passion and romance *feel* like before you share a single word. Is your marriage truly romantic? Does it involve deep conversations and emotional connection and mutual respect? How about the flirtations and passions of erotic love? Oh, sure, the kids may cringe at the kissing and hugs. But such affection is a reassurance that all is well between the king and queen in the kingdom of your house. It's not a given that a marriage is awash in the stuff of romance and emotional and sexual mutual love. Too many marriages blow passion on angry fights or silent civil wars or avoidant hobbies. Your children will feel this.

But then comes the actual talk about sex.

My hope here is to give a map for what an actual sex-talk conversation might look like. And here is the biggest relief I can give you: It's not one talk. It's many, many talks. Sex educator Julie Metzger describes it as several hundred one-minute sex talks over their whole life.² That's a good image. It doesn't have to be hours at a time and probably won't be. It's formation that happens over the daily routines and activities of life. But of course, there are iconic moments along the way.

That one-minute time frame should make this clear: You don't have to say everything all at once or share every last detail. Try to speak to what you sense their questions are currently. Say enough to slake their curiosity without drowning them in information overload, answering questions they hadn't even thought about yet. And here is the impossible dance: to say enough without saying too much. Just do your best to stay at the pace of their curiosity.

These conversations span a child's whole growing-up years. And so, I want to walk you through a vision for what that might look like through different stages of their childhood.

I want you to keep this in mind the whole time: Evil's greatest hope for your children's sexuality is to join shame to their embodiment and sexuality (that's the Enemy's goal for you too, by the way). And therefore, your overarching goal will be to bless their growing bodies and sexuality and romantic interests and all the curiosity that comes with this. It's good to set a tone that nothing is too inappropriate to talk about or ask about.

I think the vision you need to cast for your children is not simply purity, but childlike innocence and curiosity. Not simply sinlessness, but wonder and awe. God made sexuality and gave us its wild goodness to tell us something about his heart for our pleasure and intimacy. We need to bless the goodness of sexuality without snuffing it out.

CHILDHOOD (0-6): EMBODIMENT

The sex talk starts the day your children are born. Don't get me wrong. It's not going to be about the birds and bees for a while. But there are some very important ways for you to nurture and grow their little selves that precede the hard work of the talk.

We need to be clear: While children are not yet sexually awakened, they are wildly *sensual* beings. Our sexual awakening happens at puberty (unless we are awakened prematurely through sexual harm). It's not to say they don't have great curiosity about sexuality and feel romantic inclinations. It's just that for children, life is sensual, curious, embodied, before it's ever sexual.

Let me sharpen this point. Sensuality and sexuality are very different things. To be sensual is to be oriented around your senses. We are all born into the world very, very embodied. For the first number of years, everything is learned by taste, touch, sight, smell, or hearing. Though children often have profound abstract thoughts on God and life, textbook learning is not the playground of children. They live in the school of sensory experience. What is cold or hot, rough or soft, icky or tasty? They eat the snow, grab the bug, lie in the dirt, squish in the mud, lick the bowl.

And the embodiment goes far beyond the act of learning. Our bodies are also our vehicles to play and venture into the world. To the best of our ability, we run, jump, dance, wrestle, cry, punch, giggle, snuggle, kick—if we can help it, everything other than sitting still. We need to jump off that rock, swing from that limb, flop in that snow.

This deep embodiment—both to take in the world and to act in it—is how we know the world and know ourselves. It’s where we learn boundaries and bodies, pleasure and pain, likes and dislikes, really feel the edges of our self. And this sensuality, this connectedness to our bodies, builds the bedrock of our embodiment, including our sexuality.

In these early years, this is the “conversation” you need to have with your children. Help them be well in their bodies. How can you bless their embodiment, sensuality, and play? This may not involve a lot of words. The easiest and quickest way to do that is to join it. Stage it. Create the opportunities for it. Take them to forests and parks, put on good music in your home, try different food experiences, teach different sports, go to musicals, draw and color and create.

And talk about life in sensual ways. Ask them what they see, hear, taste, touch, or smell. I often ask my boys to reflect on church from the vantage point of their senses. Name something you heard, smelled, tasted, touched, and saw. You could do this with really any experience. What does it feel like to jump your bike? What does snuggling feel like?

Teach the pleasure of the world through their senses.

I hope to teach my boys a lot about life. But near the top of my list, just below potty training and how to walk, is the ability to see and enjoy beauty. I know learning to say you're sorry and developing a taste for vegetables are really important life lessons. But not more important.

I believe the ability to see and enjoy beauty is the foundation of all true spiritual belief, all romance, and the ability to see human dignity in everyone. It's at the heart of all pleasure. Beauty is the truest pleasure. And enjoying the beautiful things of the world with reverence and respect and delight will set them up to enjoy their sexuality.

Physical touch is another hands-on way to bless the embodiment of your children. Fill them with affection. Hug them as often as they'll let you. Hold their hand, massage their little bodies at night, wrap them in your arms. Let them wrestle you down to the floor. All of this good, healthy, loving touch tells them their bodies are worth love and care and comfort.

And since, as I teach in my book, sex is a form of play in itself, teach your children good play. Don't just let them play; break away from your task mode and play *with* them. Think of all the lessons in good play—respecting the rules, being vigorous but not too much, learning to enjoy it and let people be done when they want—all of which can build the deep respect and mutuality needed to form a bedrock for good sex

one day. Play holds all the necessary lessons on consent too. But while you play, kill the temptation to only affirm them when they score or win. Affirm, instead, the way you see them learning their bodies, enjoying the pleasure of play as a thing in itself, and respecting others.

All of this builds deep connection to their bodies. And deep blessing of their bodies. In a thousand ways, you are saying, “Your body is a good part of you. And your way with your body is good.”

This extends even to their curiosity about their bodies. It’s not simply that their bodies become the way to inhabit and know the world. They will be curious about their bodies, and there’s a good chance they’ll want to be naked in them a lot. My boys reveled in what we came to call Nakey Time. Nightly, as we attempted to wrangle them into bath time and then their pajamas, they’d escape our clutches and streak naked up and down the hallways. Again, it was like some ancient memory of Eden, the pure gleeful joy in being naked in the world.

This nakedness, this wonder at their own good bodies, is a really good thing to affirm in your children. The curiosity with their own toes or ears or cheeks, their own voice, their own tongues, and yes, their own genitals. It’s a good thing for them to be curious about their own parts. It’s so intriguing. In this exploration, it’s not uncommon for children to discover rudimentary masturbation. Even babies in utero have been documented on ultrasounds exploring it.³ To be

very clear: This is not sinful or lust driven. It's simply sensual exploration. Touching your genitals with their thousands of nerve endings just feels good and soothing. Yes, habits of masturbation in children can be a sign of sexual abuse or a loss of parental physical affection.⁴ So be curious about it, but don't punish it or react in panic to it.

I encourage you to use the right words for their genitals. Call it a penis because that's its name. And yes, women have vulvas, not just vaginas. When we avoid talking about something and treat it with silence, we convey unnecessary shame. Naming something can bring inherent blessing. This may feel awkward. And here again, there's a good chance that awkwardness might be rooted in your story.

The other day a client told me how he is at this point with one of his sons, a growing boy. He found himself stuck at the idea of using the actual names. He realized his struggle had more to do with his own story. He felt so bodily uncomfortable and ashamed because his parents never used the words and even treated them more like swear words. He felt firsthand the reality that if something exists but is never named or talked about, an inherent pall of shame settles over it. Getting your children comfortable with names helps to fight that shame. Even this seemingly small act was changing the generations.

Because of this body goodness and glory, we don't let just anyone touch our bodies. Here is where you want to teach your children about safe touch. Who gets to touch your body?

Help them learn good boundaries around their bodies. That only mom and dad and safe doctors get to touch their private parts.

To that end I really recommend that you let your children decide who they hug or kiss. Don't force them to hug people they don't want to. You can do this by giving them options. "Do you want to give grandma a hug or a high five or just say, 'hi'?"

Despite many children's protest of clothing, it's good in this season to teach them why we wear clothes. No other creatures wear clothes (don't say hermit crab; it's a house!). As I talk about in my book, clothes cover sacred things, our sexed bodies especially. It's the sacred things in the Bible that get covered. That's a big concept for kids. Our bodies are special, and we cover them to comfort them and protect them.

The early years are building to the crescendo of blessings of their bodies—good bodies, no matter how they look or work or function. You have a good body. And you are invited to use it to explore and experience the world.

Older Childhood (7-12): Curiosity

But how does the baby actually get in their mom's stomach?" "How do you know who to marry?" "Dad, what does f__k mean?" "Why does my penis get stiff?" "But how does God actually bring the sperm and egg together?" "What is a prostitute?" "How do you kiss a girl?"

Welcome to the age of questions. They may have already started in early childhood. But they only increase, especially as your children age and grow curious and make friends. We like to curse curiosity, as the thing that "killed the cat," as they say. But curiosity is a profoundly God-given impulse in this beautiful mess of a world. Sex researcher Emily Nagoski says that, in the brain, sexual desire mimics curiosity. ⁵It's not a body drive as much as a curious desire. Blessing this curiosity about sex is a way to bless your child's sexual essence.

"Dad, what are these little rocks under my penis?" asked one my sons. And so we talked about testicles and what they do in storing sperm and how God takes a cell from a mom and a cell from a dad and combines them to make babies.

Welcome the questions. Answer them as best you can. And here is where you have to practice trying to scratch the

itch of their curiosity without sharing beyond where they are ready. That's hard, if not impossible. But try we must. When they gloss over or cringe, stop and stand proud for checking the box on one of those one-minute conversations.

The founder of our kids' preschool drummed into us early on, "Answer your kids' questions. Because they will get an answer somewhere. If you don't answer them, they'll go to their friends. And is that who you want teaching them about life?" And in this case, about sex too. If you're a parent, you know these questions arise unpredictably. And as children age, their questions get a little more in-depth and direct and curious.

Most likely, these will become the years for the actual sex talk.

And as you've heard me say, sex should be talked about in hundreds of little talks. Not just one. But having said that, I do believe there is an iconic, sacred moment where the reality of sex is shared with your children.

I suggest you try to make this a ceremonial moment, a time you set aside to make sacred. That doesn't have to be too fancy or elaborate. But somewhere it would be good to be intentional about disclosing the reality of how sex works and the pleasure and goodness God envisioned for sex.

As I write in my book, sex always lives in a story. It's never simply a bodily function. And so while teaching the mechanics of sex is a huge gift to our children, we must also explain the story of sex, or as I call it in the book, the "poetics"

of sex. The mechanics—this goes *here* when *this* happens—are the stage notes to a play. Share the play. Tell them about romance and love and the joy of making love. We said to our children something like, “It may sound weird now, but it’s made to feel good for both partners.” Explain that sex involves orgasms for both partners, not simply the joining of sperm and egg. And why a romantic marriage is the best story for sex.

This will probably make you think of a whole host of things to warn them about in relationships. But now is not the stage to share all of the pitfalls of sex and romance. Again, you’re giving them imagination for its goodness.

Once we kinda knew our sons’ questions were leading there and that sharing about sex seemed right, we set aside a moment with each son and read them a child-based book on the act of sex. Both Amanda and I were there and both took turns reading the book. It was fairly short. We both shared a few thoughts at the end, mostly celebrating the goodness and pleasure of sex. They marveled for a minute, cringed a little too, and the curiosity tank was full. And then we asked if our sons had any questions. They didn’t. It was a lot to take in. All in all, it lasted maybe twenty minutes.

Our sons were all around age 7. But I know some parents who take their 10-year-old kids out to a hotel or ski trip and share the news. Usually it’s the same-sex parent who does this. That can be super meaningful too.

I hung out with a friend a while back who had just taken

his son on a hike to tell him about sex. With tears in his eyes he said, “Sam, his innocence was so precious to behold.” You will feel that too, in your children. Again, it’s those vestiges of Eden, the memory of our innocent wonder.

Or you may be like one dad I knew, sitting in a carpool line, wondering how to explain the F-bomb to his daughter because she’d just asked. How did he answer? He told her they would talk about it together that evening, and he and his wife carried on a conversation with her that spilled past bedtime.

Again, answer their questions. And even more than this, *predict* their questions. Where are your child’s questions building to? Pay attention to their friend groups. What do you believe they are talking about together? But again, in the near impossible tension, ask yourself: How much do you think your child could handle? Where is their curiosity threshold?

This is how you will discern the timing of the sex talk. I know some people stick to a specific age to share. And I think this is well and good as a ceremony. But be willing to flex if you sense the timing needs to be earlier.

Again, as our preschool director said, if you don’t answer their questions, someone else will. Most likely their friend group. But it could also become Google. Don’t we ask Google (or Siri, or Alexa) everything anyway? This may happen even if you predict their questions. Because they may feel a curiosity in searching the internet anyway.

I hate to break it to you, but this is the time you need to tell them about pornography also. Keep it kid appropriate. According to one research study, the average age for first viewing pornography is 12.⁶ It might be from a friend or an innocent search on Google. The pornography industry doesn't care about your kids. Or maybe better said, they would love to get another early-adopting user. They would love to tell your kids about sex and secure a lifetime customer.

I would challenge you to work very hard to guard their screens and devices. And even then, to help them understand that by the end of this period, many of their peers will have their own devices. There is a very good chance your children will see pornography before the transition through puberty. And there is an almost statistical certainty they will see it by the end of high school.

That means it's really important to start the conversation now.

Teenage Years (13–19) Dialogue

With puberty comes a child's sexual awakening. Sexuality is no longer a slumbering mystery or passing curiosity but something that's awakened within them, alive with the pulse of hormones. They don't just imagine it but now feel it. I remember as a summer-camp counselor the difference between the elementary school kids who hovered close and missed their parents, and the junior high kids who still sometimes missed their parents but wanted to sneak out late at night.

Author Michael Gurian calls puberty a child's "second birth."⁷ We are born first as a boy or girl. Now we emerge from puberty as a man or woman. But, of course, no one feels like a man or woman yet. We feel every bit like the kid but in a lanky adult's body, overwhelmed with this new existence.

I believe puberty is a God-given announcement to parents to pay attention. You have an adult in the house. And your increasing grocery bills and the child that now stands eye to eye needs to announce to you that the conversation needs to change too.

But first, a ceremony. A rite of passage. It is so important that you mark this transition into adulthood for your child. I

don't care how you do it. It's not really about how much or how little you do. But do something to celebrate your child's passage into the next stage of life. No, they are not adults at fourteen or sixteen or whatever age. But they are growing into an adult-size body now.

One woman I know learned how to use a tampon from the back of the box. No mother helped her understand what a period was or how to navigate her body's transition. Nor was this celebrated or honored. I know a man whose single mother handed him a book on puberty and never spoke a word with him about his body or sex. Another woman I know had the changes in her body treated like a pariah. Her normally affectionate father stopped hugging her once she grew breasts. It made her body feel enormously shameful. I know another man whose father announced at the dinner table that he stunk and needed to shower more, to the laughter of his younger siblings. He didn't even know his father could tell he'd hit puberty. It was the only time he ever heard anything from his father about his growing body. Evil wants us left alone and isolated to feel enormous shame for our bodies and will do whatever it takes to assault us with self-consciousness and self-hatred.

Celebrating your child's growth into adulthood could get cringey and awkward. But ignoring it may be worse. And therein lies the tension you must walk. How do you celebrate your child's passage into adulthood without exposing them? I know families that made a daughter's first period a

celebration. But that may not work in your family with a child who would feel mortified by something that overt. In a house full of boys, my sons are constantly on the lookout for any signs of armpit hair. They can't wait to be men. But other households may find that too exposing.

You need to tune into what your child needs and how they would feel celebrated.

It does not have to be body-change focused. But something that begins to invite them into the world of men and women is vital—maybe a trip, a yearlong rite of passage, a letter, a backyard bonfire ceremony. Anything that marks the transition. That event could begin a shift toward conversations on lots of lessons on being a man or a woman, not just sexually.

Narrate for your child along the way all the body changes that are coming. Teach them about wet dreams and involuntary erections, periods and body odor, grooming and voice-pitch cracking, sleep changes and acne. Any of those could be one-minute conversations. Picture a father and son standing before a mirror, both with faces lathered in shaving cream, as a father guides the son through how to shave. It's iconic, sure, but it speaks to all the ways we help our children embrace the goodness of these body changes.

And then, of course, there is the actual conversation on sex. It is messy and hard to become a sexually awakened person—to grow into our bodies, our sexuality, and the passion of our lover hearts. I imagine you had your own

struggles with coming of age. It is the essential reason why we talk about middle school as mortifying. It's the crushes and cracking voice and growth spurts. When I was a kid (I can't believe I just said that), we had to handle all this awkwardness by our lockers or in the gym locker room. But now add in the ability to broadcast these messages in texts and social media, and the journey through puberty is even more perilous.

It is hard to grow up into these adult-size, sexually awakened bodies.

And therefore, I believe the best posture here is to approach sexuality with *dialogue*. You may have guidelines and rules on dating, and hanging out with the opposite sex, and internet access, and monitoring texts and devices. You should have all of these. But dialogue with your child, not dogmatic rule mongering, would be the best posture.

It is *their* sexuality, not yours. And though you are called to help them walk it out, and guide them, you don't own their sexuality. Old ideas of purity often scripted awful things about a woman's purity being her father's. That is not a good message. He is called to protect, but not to "own." I've also heard terrible things for young men within purity culture around lust accountability. One young man walked into his bedroom because his parents wanted to talk to him only to find his walls plastered in printouts of the porn images he had been looking at. This was how they chose to confront him for his struggle with pron. His parents berated him for all this "filth" he had been "lusting at", even slapped his

hands. That was abusive, full stop.

I imagine this sounds horrifying to you. But I've also heard stories of fathers and teenage sons keeping each other accountable for looking at porn. Again, this is violating. This may sound loosely like a good way to share a bonding experience with a son. But a father's ongoing sexual struggles are a far too heavy burden to put on a son. He is not a friend or a trusted confidant, nor should he be.

All this is to say, dialogue is essential in this season, but it must be rooted in respect for your child. As minors, no, they are not full-grown adults and not a buddy, but they are not be children anymore either. Just punishing them or scolding them or making sure they are simply maintaining purity is not dialogue. Yes, you may need to give them consequences for sneaking out or texting late. But always help them grow in their own discernment and morality by talking with them. When do you discipline or dialogue? When should you prod for more details, and when should you leave it alone? For Christians, that is a walk of the Spirit.

This is the age to cash in the majority of those one-minute conversations. And that one minute could very well become an hour.

And this is where it's important to talk about the pitfalls of sex and romance. Yes, address how to kiss or how to ask a girl out or what makes good romance or a good date. But talk about consent and boundaries and sexual abuse and assault. Talk about sexting and slang. Explain cheating or what an

affair is about, or misogyny, or using someone. Teach them how to handle a breakup, or someone who pursues you that you don't like or, yes, a stalker. And within all of this, please make clear why a romantic marriage is the best story for sex.

You probably won't have to drum up these conversations out of thin air. The stuff of life will give you a lot of opportunities to talk. You just need to dig deep in your courage and capitalize on the moment. So, for example, when stuff happens to their friends, use it as a moment for greater dialogue. If you watch a movie or hear a song that clearly shows degradation to women, stop the movie or song and talk about it. When they have a friend whose parents divorce, or maybe you've divorced, ask them what they feel and what they think might make a safe and loving marriage. When you hear them use slang sexual words, dialogue about their meaning. Read age-appropriate news articles and talk about them. Listen to Taylor Swift and dialogue about the lyrics. But by the time your child leaves the home, especially if they are attending college, they should know about sexual consent, sexual assault, and the dangers of sexual activity and alcohol use.

In the name of dialogue, this is a good season to share about more complex moments of your own story. What was your first kiss or your first heartbreak like? What did you feel you messed up or struggled with? Where did you make mistakes? Where were you harmed? It's good for your teenagers to hear the grace and healing of God through the

script of your own story, to hear how you are human, and that no one and nothing is beyond the kindness and healing of Jesus.

But first, don't tell them a story you haven't first told a trusted other—a therapist or mentor or close friend or your spouse. Never tell unprocessed stories, because your children will feel your trauma and shame and probably feel fairly slimed by it, as if they need to take care of you. Make sure you can share it without needing them to care for you in it. And second, make sure the story is age appropriate, even in this stage. You don't have to say everything to make your point. That's for therapy. Keep it to the point and safe for them.

I hate how we have to translate sexuality for living outside of Eden. That is all so heavy, I know.

So don't forget to keep casting a vision for the beauty and goodness of sexuality and romance. Talk about the shows and movies that display good romance and healthy relationships. Talk about the family and friends that model good romance. Ask your kids who they are attracted to or what they find attractive in another person. Help them imagine what they long for.

And don't give up on growing their capacity to take in beauty and sensuality. Keep pointing out beautiful sunsets or wildflowers or good music. It's also important to help them feel awe for other people. Marvel at the finesse of a great football catch or goal. Watch stage plays and notice the power of good acting and masterful singing within a story. Take

them to concerts by exceptional musicians to train their hearts to feel overpowered by brilliance and talent and beauty, both in men and women. It helps them recognize that beauty is far deeper than simple appearance. That people are a work of art to be enjoyed, not consumed. This normalizes sensuality and beauty as a path to awe and gratitude, not consumption and objectification. It will all build them up to experience the sensual beauty of a partner and the overpowering awe of good sex. As I say in my book, sex is a form of sensual awe.

If you make dialogue normal and safe, they will trust you with their questions. Otherwise, it will be their friends only and porn and a pattern of burying their sexuality. Dialogue, not just discipline, is how we work to combat the shame that evil wants to wreck them with.

It is highly likely that you will get surprised and overwhelmed by some admission or discovery or series of questions your teenager brings. And this is why working on your own sexual story will help you breathe, know your own triggers, and not overreact. The most fundamental thing you can do is not simply react. That is hard to recognize. It's so easy to feel our own fear or trauma or shame and overreact and panic, or under-react and dismiss a really important moment. By learning to not simply overreact, or to own it when we do, you will convey to your child that nothing is beyond the grace and healing of God.

I sat with some parents whose teenager had just confessed

he had been looking at porn for a year. They had no idea whatsoever, because their son had discovered a loophole in the filters. But now he was desperate and scared and needing help. Because this couple had both done work on their stories and wounds, they didn't panic, at least not with him. They dialogued.

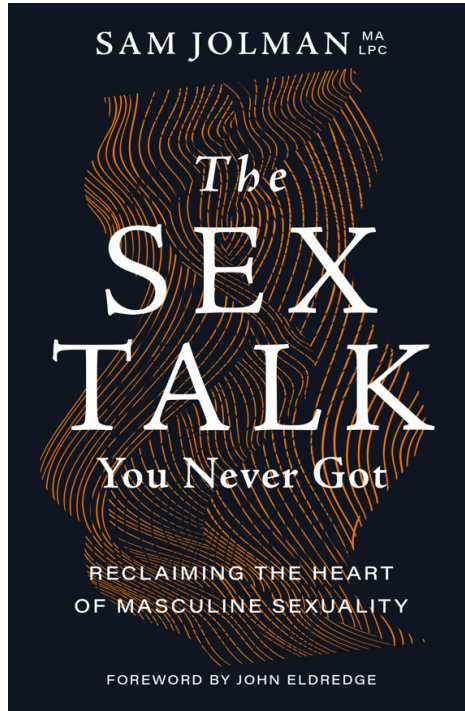
His struggle all began innocently enough, as a Google search for how to kiss a girl, and the algorithms and predatory practices of porn sites did their thing. He felt trapped in his own shame and guilt and arousal and didn't know how to get out. He felt safe enough with his parents finally to bring it up, and they are now in regular conversation with him and getting him help.

Again, nothing is outside the grace and healing of Jesus. Sexuality is not like duct tape that wears out if misused. Sexuality is not like a flower that loses its pedals. Sexuality is like anything that grows. If given the right environment, it can heal and bounce back and thrive.

There is so much to share here. I am barely scratching the surface. I imagine you're thinking of a billion questions right now. Yes, there are so many. You will not cover it all. But let me tell you, doing anything here is way better than doing nothing. We live with so much sexual neglect, so little care for our hearts around sexuality. Speaking up will help. Yes, it will be awkward at first, but it can also be life-changing.

You (with God) got this.

Read more in *The Sex Talk You Never Got*



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