

God's Best in Relationships

KICK-START WITH ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PARENTS

- Sex and purity conversations can be the hardest conversations to have with your teen, but they are also talks that can take your relationship to a new level.
- Even though your 13-year-old may wince every time the s-e-x word comes up, they really do want to feel safe with you on this topic.
- Even as an adult, you can still model purity for your teen in your media choices, language, and relationships with the opposite gender at work or in social settings.

FRAMING UP OUR PURPOSE

“One flesh” is a really big deal and a great place to start the conversation.

“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She will be called “woman,” because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother, and will join with his wife, and they will be one flesh.” --Genesis 2:22-24

When God first brought a man and woman together, Adam’s response was that she was, in reality, a part of him. It pretty much took his breath away to realize that they were meant to be made one.

A great place to start in explaining the sacredness of sex is that God *intends* for us to be joined and united as one with another human being. It is a powerful union to care for another person sexually, emotionally, and spiritually, and it is not meant to be carelessly repeated with different people throughout our lives. To become one flesh means not to be torn apart.

Grace and restoration play an important part here, too, because our kids sometimes stumble and make poor sexual choices. Marriages often struggle and end. But helping our teens strive for the goal of experiencing “one flesh” with just one person will guard their hearts in a world of broken ones.

Talk to them about intimacy.

“Standing behind at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and she wiped them with the hair of her head, kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.” --Luke 7:38

“When he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” --1 Samuel 18:1

“His left hand would be under my head. His right hand would embrace me... Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm; for love is strong as death.” --Song of Solomon 8:3, 6

One definition of *intimacy* could be summarized as a feeling of belonging together. It's the sense that we can let down our guard, be real, and not worry about rejection. There are many examples of intimate relationships in our lives. Hopefully, we can learn to be intimate with God. Most people have a few friendships in their lifetime that are incredibly close and honest. And often there is at least one family relationship that is extremely close to you. So there is more than one kind of intimate relationship where we feel like we belong with someone.

Talk about sex through the lens of God's best for them.

"The man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed." --Genesis 2:25

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light..." --1 Peter 2:9

Although it's true that sex outside of marriage is a bad choice--and there can be painful consequences to unhealthy sexual behavior--, sex is still God's gift to us, and it's not helpful to just tell our teens that it's "bad." We want them to anticipate not being ashamed of past relationship struggles and look forward to this gift that they someday will give their spouse. We want them to see that God has His very best in mind for us when He commands us to save sex for marriage. It's also important for our teens to discover that they should not

only be concerned about God's best for themselves but also God's best for the people they are attracted to and God's best for the people they are influencing. Their perspective will really be impacted when they consider that their sexual behaviors have an impact on the people around them, too.

Give practical guidance to help them set healthy relationship boundaries.

"Finally then, brothers, we beg and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, that you abound more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God: your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who don't know God; that no one should take advantage of and wrong a brother or sister in this matter..."

--1 Thessalonians 4:1-6

Paul reminds the church in Thessalonica that he has given

them a description of how to walk and please God. Christian culture does a good job of telling teens, "Don't do that," when it comes to sex. We don't do such a good job of equipping them for that challenge. Here are a few ideas to equip you and your teen to walk this journey of purity:

Encourage your teen to enjoy co-ed friendship groups as often as possible, because they can learn so much more about sharing everyday

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life with the opposite sex in those relationships than they will in dating relationships.

Establish the PDA boundaries in your home (location and privacy) to help them avoid tempting situations.

Ask your teen questions like “Are you trusting in God’s best for you in your dating relationships?”

and “Are you remembering to keep God’s best for your girlfriend/boyfriend ahead of your own desires?”

Lastly, troubleshoot with your teenager about what to do if they find themselves in a situation where they might compromise on sexual choices.

IDEAS FOR STRIVING FOR GOD’S BEST IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

- Ask fearless questions like “How are you doing in this relationship?”
- Introduce your teen to couples who have a powerful purity story to tell.
- Point out scriptures that reinforce trusting God’s best for our lives.
- Discourage middle school girls and boys from “going together” and have them wait for actual dating till at least their junior year.
- Teach your son to call and ask a girl’s father if he can ask her out on a date.
- If your teen is in a relationship, have dinner with the young couple once a month.
- Sexting is a HUGE problem among teens, so social media accountability is a non-negotiable. You should always be allowed to know passwords and check their Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and text messages.