

## Philosophy and Q & A

I never planned to write about sex, at least not in a way that was intended for children's ears. But [when conveying this great mystery of marriage](#) to my children, there was an underlying excitement that, frankly, made me want that same experience for every parent and child. I've heard horror stories of kids shutting down, girls avoiding their fathers, and boys avoiding their mothers after "the talk." Sadly, there will be cases where early and unwanted sexual contact has made the conversation much more difficult. When dealing with healthy and happy children, though, the talk *should* be a breeze.

Sex belongs to us; it's only been high-jacked by the world. Sex was created by God and given as a gift to His children. It is not a necessary evil. Our wonderful Creator saw sex not only as the perfect way to create life but also as a way to join two people in a holy covenant. Sex is set apart for this holy covenant between man and wife, therefore sex is holy. Sex is sacred and very private, but that doesn't mean it is awkward or embarrassing. The way you think and feel about sex will come across in your conversations with your children, and we want to do everything we can to make that conversation an easy one.

**Q:** How early should I tell my children?

**A:** [A Marriage, a Mystery, and Me](#) is based on the philosophy that parents should create a safe environment in which their children feel comfortable asking questions and speaking up. No question or topic should be off-limits simply because if a child is searching for answers he *will* find them—somewhere. Shouldn't that somewhere be you? *A Marriage, a Mystery, and Me* is written in such a way that it can be read even to your very small children. How much deeper the conversation goes should depend on the questions asked by your children. Through our research at WIL, we have found that waiting on the topic only increases the awkwardness for parents and children and suggest that the simplest explanation be given by age seven/eight if not earlier.

**Q:** How much should I tell my children?

**A:** When answering children's questions about sex, [the most direct explanations are best](#). Children need answers to questions like "What is sex?" and "How are babies made?" and "Why won't you let me wear short shorts?" Keep it simple, but tell the absolute truth from an accurate biblical and biological standpoint; leave any personal feelings (especially if those feelings are negative) out of your answers. If the quizzing from your children approaches an awkward area, *try* to give them an answer that will satisfy their curiosity and keep them from searching for that answer elsewhere. But don't be afraid to eventually say, "That's something you will learn with your spouse once you are married."

**Q:** How much information is presented in *A Marriage, a Mystery, and Me*?

**A:** *A Marriage, a Mystery, and Me* is light on biology and heavy on spiritual application. This is the approach I took when having the initial talk with my children. I let their questions guide me in how much biology I presented, but I wanted to be sure they understood what marriage and sex represent, from a biblical standpoint, so we could then have real conversations about abstinence, boundaries, and modesty.

**Q:** How do I present the perfect picture to my children when I've made so many mistakes?

**A:** Easy. Our behavior does not and can never alter God's standards. Once your children are old enough to understand, it's a good idea to tell them about the pain that sin brought to your life, but don't be afraid to present God's standards just because you didn't meet them yourself. We all fall short, but we are commanded to aim for His standards and to present those standards to our children.

**Q:** My parents never had the talk with me. Why is it necessary that I have the talk with my children?

**A:** If you are one of the many adults who was never sat down for a sex talk, where *did* you learn about sex? More than likely, you learned from your friends. Fortunately for me, we had a good set of encyclopedias. When my parents didn't feel I was ready for the talk, I turned to scientific explanations instead. Imagine if I'd been a child today! Would I have turned to Google?! (Please be sure that you are not only monitoring but are blocking potentially harmful internet activity.)

Today's children are bombarded with sexualized images and messages. Turning off the t.v. is a good start, but there are still billboards, checkout counter magazines, department store ads, and immodestly dressed people to contend with. Just because your children aren't asking questions about these sexualized images doesn't mean they aren't thinking about them. It's what the world is feeding them daily.

In days past, it might have been acceptable to let children learn about sex from their peers. In my neighborhood today, eight and nine year old children not only have "boyfriends" and "girlfriends" but base each other's social status on whom they are "dating" and whom they have kissed. Is this the generation you want teaching your kids about sex?—a generation that believes waiting is foolishness, godliness is akin to wimping out, and selfishness is the highest standard?

Receiving this crucial information straight from you teaches your children that you are the person to turn to when they have questions or problems in the future. Receiving this information (even if it is accurate) from another source serves to create emotional distance

between parent and child. If you don't want your children keeping important secrets from you when they are older, be open with them while they are young.

**Q:** In this day and age, is it really reasonable for me to expect my children to wait until marriage to have sex?

**A:** Not with that attitude. But really, yes, of course it is. God's ways are timeless. The more the world crumbles around us, the more set-apart we should be and appear. If they fail, be there for them with loving and healing hands, but don't set your children up to fail. The way you approach the topic of sex will have a lot to do with the decisions they make in the future. You can't make their decisions for them, but you can lay the groundwork for success.

**Q:** What was the main point you addressed when having the talk with your children?

**A:** This isn't the popular Christian answer, but I wanted my children to understand that there is not one perfect person for them. There are good choices and bad choices, wise decisions and unwise decisions, that lead to choosing the right kind of person. That person becomes *the one* when we join them in marriage. Many young couples get married and then immediately worry they've married the wrong person because they've mistakenly believed that finding that one perfect person will make their lives complete (i.e. easy). When things get hard, as we all know they do, they may begin looking (sometimes subconsciously) for someone else.

My husband and I want our children to grasp the role they are called to represent in the great, mysterious story of Christ and the Church. We want them to have their hearts set on waiting for marriage because they not only understand the holiness of that picture but also understand the importance of portraying that picture to the world.

—Sarah Hawkes Valente

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