

Sex and the Man in the Mirror

How To Discuss Sex With Your Children

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning, men. From time to time, one of us departs this place and goes on to other things. Michael Kintner, who's been a faithful table leader for many, many years is leaving. He's with FedEx here, and he's going to be moving to the headquarters. Memphis, I guess? Michael, I wonder if you would come up, and I'd just like to have a prayer for Michael, and maybe some applause, too. Michael has had a real passion for hurting men. He not only has his ministry here, but also at First Baptist Church, has led a Sunday morning men's Bible study for many years. He's just ... picks up strays. Not that all you guys over there are strays, but he just picks up stray guys and loves them, and has been a real disciple maker. Let's have a prayer sending Michael off to Memphis.

Our dearest Father, we thank you for this wonderful man, this servant of the Most High God, who has answered Your call on his life to disciple men who will disciple other men. Father, he has built into the lives of so many men, even in seasons of deep hardship in his own life. We rejoice that You have given him this opportunity in Memphis with his company, FedEx, and Father, we send him as an ambassador of Jesus to the community of Memphis. We pray that he would unite with other Christians in that community and have, Father, even a greater impact there than he's had here, which would be a voluminous impact. We thank You for his life, his testimony, his witness, his presence, his friendship, his love for us, his caring for other men, and we bless him and ask, Lord, that You will bless him with a great abundance in every area of his life. We do this in the name of Jesus, and everybody said ...Amen. Thank you, brother. God bless you.

I'll say the other things I wanted to say at breakfast afterwards. If you would please, turn in your Bibles to Psalm 85. Psalm 85. Also I mentioned, we are looking, as I mentioned last week, for about three table leaders. We'd love to have some of you who might be interested in exploring leadership attend the table leader retreat on January 30. You can see me if you have an interest in knowing more about that.

Let's go ahead and do a shout-out. Today's shout-out goes to Fishers of Men at the Sanctuary Church in Evans, Georgia. The leader there is Jimmy Huff. Jimmy Huff is a field rep with Man in the Mirror. He has ten men, they've been meeting for three and a half years on Mondays at 7 pm. I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm and rousing welcome to this group, Fishers of Men, in Evans, Georgia. One, two three. Hoo-rah. Welcome, guys, we're glad to have you with us.

We're doing this series, Sex and the Man in the Mirror, and today, in this third and final session, we're going to talk about how you can discuss sex with your children. How to discuss sex with your children. In some cases it'll be me discussing sex with you for the first time, I get that. Seriously, what was your sex education like? Was sex taboo in your home, it was just a topic that was left untouched? There's a very Victorian kind of ethos that still is really the main, not withstanding all the sexual things that are going

on in our culture today. Still, this Victorian idea is still very entrenched. Maybe your dad or your mom had "the talk" with you, had this one big talk where they sat down and explained some things. Maybe it was very awkward for them. Maybe it was very awkward for you. Maybe it was like the guy who said to his teenage son, he said, "Son, you know all about girls, right?"

The son said, "Well, yeah, sure." Dad said, "Good, that's real good. Would you like to play some catch?" That was the boy's sex education. I think I mentioned last week, my sex education, the complete sex education that I ever had, from my parents at least ... I had plenty of sex education, but from my parents, it was driving home one day from school. I happened to have mentioned to my mom that there was a girl in our school, her name was Carol. I don't know if it was true or not, but the rumor was that she was a girl who would do things. I'm not sure how I put that to my mom, but a few days later we're driving home from school one day and on the bench seat of our car, she just sort of slid ... she was looking down the road, and she slid across the seat this little pamphlet, and didn't really even say anything. That was my sex education. That was it, that's all I ever really got from my parents.

Today I want us to talk about, what is the best way to educate our children about sex? When should you do it, what are the issues that ought to be considered, and then what are the actual things that you talk about and when do you do it? First up, who best to educate your children about sex? Of course for some of you, this is going to be more about grandchildren. I said turn to Psalm ... whatever I said, but I hope I said 78, but I don't think I did. I think I said 85, because that just happened to be where I had the Bible open at the time. Let's try Psalm 78 instead. Verse 1, "O my people, hear my teaching, listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from of old, things we have heard and known." Well, where did this knowledge come from, these things that were hidden and have been made known? It says in the next phrase, "things our fathers have told us." That's where the knowledge that they had came from. Their fathers had told them. What will we do with this knowledge that we gain from our fathers? Verse 4, "We will not hide them from their children, we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power and the wonders He has done."

Just a question, do you think that the miracle of sex, the beauty and the goodness of sex, do you think that this would fall ... do you think sex would fall into the category of the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power and the wonders He has done? As much as anything we could possibly talk about! This unique reproductive system, if you will, that God has introduced into mankind. Not only that, the joy and the pleasure that it gives to humans, it certainly is praiseworthy. It certainly is part of the mysterious things, as well. We're going to not hide these things from our children, we're going to tell the next generation, it says. Why are we going to do that? Well, verse 5: "He decreed statutes for Jacob, and established the law in Israel." If you want to go back sometime, you could read Leviticus 18. Chapter 18 Leviticus, verse 20, I put them down here, what the rules and the regulations around sexual behavior were would have been well known, would have been well known, to a New Testament Christian. Would have been well known to the Jew of the Old Testament period.

"He decreed statutes for Jacob, and established the law in Israel, which He commanded our forefathers to teach our children." It's commanded, it's commanded to teach our children the decrees and the commands of God. I think that I would be of the opinion, I hope that you would join me in this, that God's decrees about sex are extremely important. Sex will occupy a huge part of your children's lives. Their sexuality is going to be a dominant theme of all of their life, and so such a huge area of their life deserves a generous amount of attention from. Who is going to be best to educate your children about sex, according to the text? It's going to be you. It's going to be you.

The research shows a number of things. It shows that of all the sex educators, parents get an exponentially better result when they are involved in the sex education of the children. Every research article I read says basically the same thing, that you know where children want to get their sex education? They want their parents to be the ones who explain to them the marvels and the mysteries of sex. The basic sentence that I thought captured it best was, "I want to have my parents guide me." I want to have my parents guide me. There's this repetitive theme also among parents, "I want them to hear it from me first." Most parents really feel this way, even if they don't actually go ahead and take action on that.

Let's just talk about some goals for education of our children in the area of their sexuality. One goal we would probably all have would be to have healthy attitudes towards the body and towards sexuality, just to have healthy attitudes. A second goal for us would be that sex would not be a subject of shame, which would be the result of ... When parents use code words and don't talk about it and it becomes taboo, then children pick up the cues on that, that sex is not something that you're supposed to be normal about, it's sometimes even dirty. It ends up being a source of shame. A third goal would be to just teach our children how to be responsible with sex. How to be responsible with sex. Then maybe a fourth goal would just be how to have healthy male-female relationships, particularly with regard to sexuality.

How might we best accomplish these goals? Well, it's so interesting. **The Big Idea today is this:** Having the talk is out. I didn't find a single educator or researcher who thinks that having the talk is the way to go at this point. What's in now is an ongoing conversation about sex. **Having the talk is out; what's in is having an ongoing conversation about sex.** Doesn't that make a lot of sense? What would you think if I invited you to come to this Bible study once, and let me tell you about Jesus, and then I said, "Okay, good talk." It would make no sense whatsoever. It's the repetitive discussion of the subject that makes it become alive in real. Basically, what I'm suggesting here is that we should think about discipling our children about sex. We should disciple our children about sex.

The problem's, of course, is we feel inadequate. It's just like witnessing. Teaching our kids about sex is pretty much tantamount to witnessing. We feel inadequate, we don't necessarily feel like we know what we ought to say, and it makes us feel uncomfortable. In the same way that witnessing is extremely important, educating our children about sex is also extremely important.

What are the issues? Let's take a look at some of these issues. Where do you think your children are going to learn about sex if they don't learn about it from you? You've thought about this, no doubt. We know that there is ... that the whole recreational sex ethos of the culture at large is really captured in movies and in music and in television. I've read one study that said that 70% of the TV shows that teens are attracted to have sexual content. 70% of their TV shows have sexual content. That's one way that they would learn about sex.

Now, I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself, but it seems like a good place to say it. One of the opportunities here, and with all these different things that we're going to be talking about, is to be looking for teachable moments. If your children are watching a TV show, you might pop your head in, or even watch it with them, and then when there is something that is a sexual situation that either is in concert with your values or opposed to your values, probably mostly opposed in TV shows I would think, then use that as a teachable moment. In other words, an ongoing conversation about sex. A teachable moment. Be looking for those teachable moments.

Then another place they're going to be getting their content, their learning, if not from you, of course would be from friends. What's the problem with getting your sexual education from your friends? They're just as stupid as you are. Yeah, I mean, they don't know. You get six months older than the other one, and so now you're the expert because you're a little bit older, maybe a grade up. The half truths and so forth are just phenomenal.

Then I think the third place that the kids are learning from about sex if not from us ... we've got the TV, we've got the friends, and then we have the internet. It's very interesting. When kids want to know something now, they just Google it. One researcher said that when a 12-year-old wants to know what pornography is, they don't ask their parents anymore. They just go Google it. Well, why don't you go Google pornography sometime, and then click on the images button. I did that. Oh, my gosh. I didn't realize they made them that long. It's a wicked, evil, disgusting thing. It's sickening, and the problem is that these images do get stuck in our children's minds.

You might use that as a teachable moment, too. You could instruct your children on the front end. "When you see a disturbing image on the internet, go ahead and delete it. Come ask me about it and let's just talk about it." Be very matter-of-fact about that. They are going to see them. They are going to see these images. There's absolutely no way that you can insulate your children from one of the most glorious topics in the whole world, but as we know, and Saint Augustine said, that "every bad is a corruption of a good." There's plenty of bad out there, as well. We just have a responsibility, in a matter-of-fact way, to be alert and to stay on top of these things for our kids.

Just don't be hesitant. Just don't be hesitant about engaging your children on this topic of sex. Sex is a beautiful thing. Sex is a good thing, and we want you to know why it's beautiful and why it's good, and how to protect yourself from the abuse of it. The first issue is just where are they going to learn this from, if not from us. Then the second issue is just what should our demeanor be when we're educating our children about sex?

Well, number one is we should treat sex as natural. Now, I'm not talking about natural in the corrupted way, I'm talking about natural in the God way. We should treat sex as natural, and so our discussions about sex will work best if they're just matter-of-fact. "What is sexual intercourse, Dad?", said the eight-year-old boy. The right answer is, in a very natural, matter-of-fact way, "Well, sexual intercourse," in an age-appropriate response, "it's when a man puts his penis into the woman, a vagina, and they make love as a husband and wife." Very matter-of-fact. In fact, one of the worst things that we can do in the sex education of our children is to not use the names that are out there, like penis and vagina and ovum, and even anus. These are the words that are out there that are the matter-of-fact words, instead of some sort of sugar coating of the thing.

Then also is that when something happens, if you ... is to not over-react. When you find your six-year-old daughter playing doctor with a little six-year-old boy and they're comparing body parts, that's pretty normal. That's what happens when you are in this preschool, early elementary age bracket, is there's this curiosity about the sexuality. One researcher, it was interesting, she was talking about how she had these different books open on her desk and her six and a half year old daughter came in, and she wasn't quite paying attention. Her daughter said, "Oh, so that's what it looks like."

She said, "What?" She turned around, and her daughter was looking at a picture of a male penis in a book. She had no idea what it looked like. Rather than overreacting, her mother just explained, "Yes, that's what it looks like." If you're squirming now, by the way, this is something that you should not be

squirming about, you see. If I were sitting where you were, I would be squirming because ... Why? Because the entire extent of my sex education was a pamphlet slid across the bench seat of our car. I had to work through it from that angle. Others of you have perhaps grew up in a very hedonistic, where recreational sex was common and normal and so forth, and so you're trying to draw your way back from that extreme. I want to mention that as well.

Then just explain things, as I say, in a matter-of-factual way, but never preach. Don't preach, and don't be judgmental. Just explain the facts. Explain your values, but you don't have to overreact and be emotional. This would be a real problem. That's the demeanor. One issue is just where are they going to hear about it if they don't hear it from you; second issue is what kind of demeanor should you have.

Then a third issue would be when. When do you do this? Well, start early. It's a real advantage if you can start before they have hormones. I'm not a professional in this area, but I would say the categories are preschool, elementary, tweens, and teens. Now, a professional might be able to put a finer point on it. I've given you, at the bottom of your handout today, some internet resources that are excellent. Not distinctly Christian, but excellent.

The first one there is from TodaysParent.com. That's a guide to how to talk to your kids at different ages. She came up with a lot more categories than the four that I just mentioned, so I would encourage you to take a look at that if that's something that might be of interest to you. One really great idea that I came across was just the idea of using some illustrated children's books about the reproductive system and so forth. NavPress, which is a Christian publisher, has a four-book set called "God's Design for Sex." God's Design for Sex, you can look it up on Amazon, four different books. One of the books is "The Story of Me," for example. Another one is "Before I Was Born." These are great.

Now, Walt Larrimore, who is a friend of mine, he actually lives here, he is an MD, and he has written a couple of books. "The Ultimate Guy's Body Book: Not So Stupid Questions About Your Body." He's also written the girls' version of that, "The Ultimate Girl's Body Book: Not So Silly Questions About Your Body." There are many others. Dennis Rainey has written a book, "Aggressive Girls, Clueless Boys." Then here's another one of the books by Rainey, "So You're About to Be a Teenager." There are lots of great resources out there. Just go and fool around on Amazon, you'll be able to find them. Then I put some of these on there as well, but the idea of getting for young children especially illustrated books ... well, for anybody. They need to see some kind of an illustration, probably.

When do you do it? Start early. What if you didn't? Start now. When do you do this, when do you have these discussions as an issue? When they ask about something. The other time to talk to them about it is when they don't ask about something. If you see something that you know is sexual and is dramatic, if your kids don't mention it, that doesn't mean they are not curious about it. They are. You have curiosity about lots of things you don't talk about. You would be well served to use that as one of those teachable moments.

I'm thinking right now, I didn't prepare it in my notes, but I'm just thinking of Beyonce at the Super Bowl halftime show a couple of years ago. I mean, okay, so yeah, I told you this story at the time. I said my wife looked at me after the halftime show and she says, "She has a beautiful smile." I laughed out loud. I said, "Look, yeah, I'm sure she does have a beautiful smile, but I can assure you there's not a single man in the entire planet who's been looking at her smile." To use that as a teachable moment to talk about sexuality, and what's appropriate, what's not appropriate. I'm not going to park on Beyonce, but you get the idea here.

Then the next issue ... We've talked about where are they going to learn it if they don't learn it from you, what should your demeanor be, when should you do this, and then, where? Where should you do it? Well, some sexual conversations can be awkward. I mean, they really can be. This is why the idea of having the talk is out, and having an ongoing conversation is in, because you can have your conversation about these topics as they come up. We've already talked about maybe TV shows, but just to make it situational. You can have these conversations in the automobile, where you're looking straight ahead and the child ... so you're not having to make eye contact. Texting has become a great way of parents communicating back and forth. Just giving your children permission, encouraging them even, to ask you questions about sex. There are I guess a lot of other things we could talk about, but there are dangers out there, okay, and this is why we want to have an ongoing conversation.

Some of the dangers, just like oral sex has become ... There's a book out, I didn't even look at the book, I just looked at the title. It says, "Oral Sex is the New Goodnight Kiss." Apparently, it's not a sensational book, but it's just a very fact-based book. Basically, by the age of 15, 13% of our children have had oral sex. By the time they reach the age of 19, 70% of our children will have had oral sex. This is a huge issue, and something to make sure that our children know our values and where we stand, and hopefully they're in the other group. The big idea today, having the talk, that's out. It's not relevant anymore to do sex education that way. What's in is this ongoing conversation about sex, and now, just what do we talk about when we're doing this.

Let me give you the list. I'm going to give you the list from the book "The Dad in the Mirror." It's in the sex chapter on there. David Delk and I wrote this book. We broke it down to ages 5 to 11, and I would change this. Now I would also begin, I would have a category from 0 to 5 as well. In the studies that I've done, infants 18 months and older actually masturbating, pleasuring themselves and so forth, and it's normal part of growing up. It's a normal part of life, and so we should talk about it so that it's part of their sex education. Ages 5 to 11, here you go. Three things, where babies come from and how they are made. Secondly, your body, its different parts and the functions of these different parts. Then the third thing is God's plan for sex, making babies and pleasure for married couples. Reproduction, the human body, and then God's design for sex.

Then from age 12 on, the sanctity and the dignity of sex, both the immoral and spiritual considerations. Lust, what is lust, and how does that come into play. What are the boundaries for sex, and how do you guard your heart, what are the safeguards for sex. Dating, and how sex relates to dating. Premarital sex, your views and values on that, and God's. Sexually transmitted diseases and SDI's, sexually transmitted infections. Did you know that one out of every four adults in the United States has an incurable STD? I wouldn't want to fool around. I mean, a little better odds than winning the lottery there. Masturbation, to talk about this. That may be one of those little more uncomfortable things. What's even more uncomfortable is stumbling on your child while they're doing it, but to have a discussion about this.

By the way, age 12 on, 12 is the tweens, so when kids go to middle school, sex becomes gross, all right? Sex is very neutral until .. In these first categories of preschool and elementary, they're not thinking, they're not sexually wired at all. Then there's this pre-puberty season where they are ... some people call them tweens, and sex is gross, and it's, "Dad, I can't believe you said that!" You take that all into account. Their hormones, once they hit puberty, different ages, it'd be 12 to 18, but about 13 years of age, this is when the hormones start to kick in. It's a good idea to have these things out in the open by then. From age 12 on, these things, lust, blah, blah, blah, masturbation. Pornography, and having sexual fantasies. Talking about the swimsuit edition of Sports Illustrated, and so forth.

Talking about how far is too far, about, for example, we've got some things in this book, and I've written some things in "The Young Man in the Mirror," but basically in this book we talk about not touching another person of the opposite sex in any place that a soccer uniform would cover. Not touching a boy anywhere below the waist, or not touching a girl's breasts or any place below her waist. Just to have these things that we just say, "It's just not done. It's just not something that we do." Laying out how far is too far. Then talking about oral sex, talking about homosexuality and same-sex attraction. Then forgiveness for sexual sin as well. These are topics to talk about.

As I say, there's so many age-appropriate resources online. I think the bottom line here on what do we talk about is that nothing, nothing, should be off limits, except your own private sex life. One researcher said it well, said that ... Maybe it was a counselor, that if your child asks you, "What is your sex life like," then just say, "Well, some things are private, but I'm happy to talk to you about why you're asking that question." Everything else should be open for discussion, but you don't want to be discussing your own private sex life with your children. That's okay, when they become teens they're going to think it's gross anyway, so it won't be a question forever.

Now, I think I'm really out of time here, but I just want to mention, in "The Young Man in the Mirror," I did pull together 15 young high school boys, a couple middle schoolers, a couple college boys, and the rest in teenage years. I know that I'm answering the questions that young men have about sex in this book, because I didn't write the book in a vacuum. I asked young men to write down, anonymously, on 3x5 cards, the questions that they wanted to have answered about sex, so here's what your teenage boys, at least, these are the questions that they have about sex. How far is too far; is it wrong to have premarital sex if I really love the person. These are very genuine questions, you know? Is it wrong to have oral sex before marriage; if I have already gone too far, what can I do to correct it; is it a sin to masturbate, is masturbation wrong if I feel it can give me more strength for when I go out with my girlfriend, strength not to sin with her. These are great questions.

Are the swimsuit edition magazines and Victoria's Secret catalogs pornographic, should I be looking at them; how do I defeat lust, how do I control my sex thoughts and actions, and so forth and so on. These are real questions that our kids really are asking, and they're coming up in the minds of our kids. How often? All the time. That's why the big idea today is this: Having the talk is out. What's in is having an ongoing, matter-of-fact conversation with our kids about human sexuality so that they would have healthy views of their body and their sexuality, healthy views of male-female relationships, so they wouldn't feel ashamed of their bodies or sex, and so that they would be able to act responsibly with this powerful thing that God has given us that we call sex.

Let's pray. Our dearest Father, Lord, some of us have been on this from day one, and we've done a great job, so thank You that You've equipped those of us who have gone that direction. Lord, others of us have really just not known what to do, and so I pray, Father, that You would use this to begin a thought process for those men to be responsible in teaching their children about sex, and how they might go about it. Obviously, we only scratched the surface here today, but Lord, we did bring up probably most of the main things that need to be thought about. Father, I pray that You would help each and every one of us, help our children to grow up with a profound respect for the beauty and the goodness of sex, and a lack of shame, and also the wisdom to make the right choices along the way. We ask these things in your name, Jesus. Amen.