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KIDS + SEXUAL
STEWARDSHIP
RESOURCE
GUIDE



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TERMS & DEFINITIONS

- ⊙ **Intimacy** - close familiarity, friendship
- ⊙ **Family** - a small group of Christians who live in close proximity, are intimately close in relationship, and embody the gospel for one another
- ⊙ **Vocation | Relational vocation** - a calling to either Christian marriage or vocational singleness
- ⊙ **Discernment** - the process of coming to God with a question, seeking His guidance, coming to a conclusion, and moving forward into the calling
- ⊙ **Sexual stewardship** - wisely managing our need and capacity for intimacy and family in God-honoring ways



WHY?

- >Because God expects parents to teach kids about His design for sexual stewardship.
- >Because our kids are surrounded by stories
- >Our silence doesn't protect our kids' innocence. Our silence means our kids are learning the story of what sexual stewardship looks like from celebrities, songs, culture, the Enemy, even cultural Christianity.



CULTURE

Both American/Western culture and cultural Christianity offer incomplete or ungodly narratives to our kids.

American Culture

- >Intimacy = romance, sex
- >Sex is a need
- >Romantic/sexual relationships are a right
- >Denying oneself romance/sex is self-hating or repressive
- >Singleness is for self
- >Family has little meaning

Cultural Christianity

*"Cultural Christianity" is comfortable, is more about outward appearance than about Jesus, tends to pick and choose passages of Scripture to obey, and requires little sacrifice

>Intimacy = romance, marriage, sex

>Sex is a need

>Marriage is a right

>Denial of sex is good until marriage; denial of marriage is outside the norm

>Singleness is pitied, not meaningful

>Family beyond the "nuclear family" has little meaning

One of our best defenses against the lies of culture and the Enemy is to teach our kids God's wisdom.



A BETTER STORY

Part One: What God Created Us For

God created all of us to enjoy human intimacy in the context of life-long, lived-in family, and we find that family through one of the vocations God created: Christian marriage or vocational singleness. As our kids enter their young adult years, they will begin to discern with (ask) God which vocation He has given to them.

Part Two: How Things Went Wrong

Humanity's sin has bent and broken the goodness of everything God created. We see the results of that bending and breaking everywhere. We are all broken in the area of sexuality, and none of us can do intimacy or family perfectly.

Encourage your child to share with you when they discover where broken sexuality is part of their story.

Part Three: Hope

Our kids are still able to find beauty and goodness and flourish in this broken world because God offers us His wisdom through the Bible and the Church. When our kids follow God's wisdom, they'll find the greatest joy, the deepest meaning, and the richest belonging in this life.

Part One: What God Created Us For

>God created us with the capacity and need for intimacy and family, both with God and with other humans

>God designed two best ways for us to find family: through Christian marriage or vocational singleness

>Vocational singleness is a lifetime call to give up romance, dating, marriage, sex, and children to do kingdom work parents struggle to find the time, energy, or financial freedom to do

>Christian marriage is a lifetime commitment between one Christian man and one Christian woman to embody the gospel and be open to raising children

One day your kids will get to ask God which relational vocation He wants them to seek out.

>God has a preference

>Your kids won't discern until their young adult years, but you can put forth the expectation that one day they will discern

Part Two: How Things Went Wrong

Sin vs Brokenness

>Sin is a willful disobeying of God's law

>Brokenness is what happened when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve; their sin caused a chain reaction that bent and broke every perfect design and order (Rom 8:18-22)

No one has unbroken sexuality

>None of us or our kids knows what it's like to experience sexuality like God intended at Creation

>Because of sin and brokenness brought about by the Fall, the way we experience intimacy, family, singleness, marriage, and sexuality are marred and dim versions of how God intended them to be (1 Cor 13:12)

Parents focus on sexual sin, so they wait to talk about sexual stewardship until their kids are teens

>Kids will encounter brokenness before they're old enough to sin sexually

>Your child could experience sexual brokenness: infertility, widowhood, intersex biology and physiology, gender dysphoria, same-sex attraction, idolatry of romance, and more

>Your child could be sinned against: abuse, molestation, exposure to pornography, sexual jokes and slurs, and more

>The sins of others could affect your child: divorce in the family, parent or sibling addicted to pornography, parent who has an affair, abuse in the family, and more

None of us can do intimacy, family, singleness, marriage, or sex perfectly
>Sin messes up the way God intended for family and relationships to work

Part Three: Hope

Encourage your kids to share when someone sins against them or they discover brokenness

>"These kinds of things are hard and scary to tell, but I hope you will tell me the hard things as they happen in your life. I will listen to you and comfort you. You cannot get in trouble for telling me hard things, and I will be so happy that you've told me so I can help. We will figure it out together, and I'll do whatever I can to help you thrive within God's good wisdom."

>When your child shares, reassure them that experiencing broken sexuality is not their fault

>God's design for sexual stewardship still applies to them

>God is not surprised or disappointed

God is always at work and He seeks to redeem brokenness

>Our kids will still be able to find beauty and goodness in the world

>Sin can't completely overcome what God created

>God shows our kids how to flourish through the Bible and the Church



WHEN?

We should be talking about sexual stewardship earlier and more often than we think.

>Puberty begins between age 8 and 14

>Kids become aware of sexual attractions around age 9 or 10

>Average age of exposure to pornography is 11 (or 8)

>14% of kids will have sexual intercourse by age 15; over 50% by age 18

>It's wise to ensure that we've shared what we want our kids to know about God's wisdom for their sexual stewardship and God's love for those who experience same-sex attraction and those who experience gender incongruence no later than the end of 4th grade and then follow up with more complex conversations in 6th grade

Why do we need to talk to our kids about same-sex attraction and gender incongruence?

- >Because your child will know people who are LGBTQ+, and your child needs to know that God's wisdom is good for LGBTQ+ people
- >Because your child could experience same-sex attraction or gender incongruence
- >1 of every 23 people experiences same-sex attraction or gender incongruence
- >Teach your kids that God's wisdom, expectations, and love is for everyone, regardless of who they're attracted to or how they feel in their body

It's more helpful to ask Who? rather than When?

- >Guide your child's understanding before they start asking questions and before culture, the Enemy, pornography, friends, etc answer those questions for them
- >You want to be the approachable expert



BEST PRACTICES

Don't make it a big deal

- >Normalize sex, body parts, singleness, babies, same-sex attraction, puberty, pornography, etc. as regular topics of conversation
- >Shame-free

Dozens of small conversations

- >Bite-sized
- >Add more information, more nuance as your kids get older

Age-appropriate, honest answers

- >Give the information needed
- >Don't lie
- >Keep it age-appropriate

Avoid making assumptions

>Parents often make two assumptions about their kids:

- 1.They'll be attracted exclusively to people of the opposite sex
- 2.They'll one day marry

>When these assumptions color the way we talk about marriage, singleness, intimacy, family, sex, and sexuality, we alienate our kids who experience same-sex attraction, and we put marriage in a place of honor over singleness

>Small changes to vocabulary can have a big impact

- "If God calls you into a Christian marriage..."

- "As you discern your relational vocation..."

- "One day you'll find someone attractive..."

>There are many reasons your child may never marry

>Daily pray (out loud!) that your child would submit every part of his/her life to King Jesus, whatever He calls them into

>Our kids will know we won't be disappointed if they never marry or if they experience same-sex attraction



NOTES

CONVERSATION MODELING

Relational Vocations, Age 2-6

Start the conversation by asking your child some questions. Give time for your child to answer each one.

“Do you know what ‘married’ means?”

“Are you married?”

“Am I married?”

“Is Grandma married?”

“Is our friend ____ married?”

“Is our friend ____ married? (pick someone you know who is vocationally single; if you aren’t yet friends with anyone who is vocationally single, you can use Jesus or Paul as your example)

“You know what? Not everyone gets married! Marriage is good; God is the one who made marriage, and we know that He only gives good things to us. Do you know why He made marriage?”

“When a man and a woman get married, they’re supposed to love each other in a way that shows others a picture of how much God loves the Church. And God made marriage to be a safe place for kids to grow up and learn about Jesus.

“Is marriage the only way we can show others a picture of God’s love?”

“You’re right! Marriage isn’t the only way we can show others a picture of God’s love. Sometimes God tells a person not to get married, and that’s not a sad thing! That’s actually a really beautiful way to serve God. Instead of getting married and spending time taking care of children with a spouse, single people spend time serving God’s kingdom, just like our friend _____. Single people have time to do so many things for God that mommies and daddies don’t have time to do because we’re busy raising you! Isn’t that wonderful? Maybe one day God will tell you not to marry so you can have extra time to serve Him.”

Relational Vocations, Age 7-11

“Did you know that God designed two different ways we can find deep love and family with others? Those two places are called Christian marriage and committed singleness.

“Do you know what marriage is? Can you tell me more about marriage?”

“So a Christian marriage is when two people, a man and a woman, promise to love each other, raise kids together, and tell the world about Jesus. And this promise is for their whole lives!”

(Parents, if you're married, talk about how you do these things in your own marriage. Rather than focusing on the romantic aspects of your relationship with your spouse, help your child understand how a marriage tells the world about Jesus and His love for us. Help your child understand that a marriage is the safest, most stable place for kids to grow up and learn about Jesus.)

“What about committed singleness, do you know what that is? While God wants some people to get married, God wants others to not get married. Instead of getting married and raising kids and telling the world about Jesus through their marriage, people who stay single tell the world about Jesus through their singleness and raise spiritual children! They have the time and energy to do important things for God's kingdom that parents usually aren't able to do.

(Parents, help your child understand the beauty of vocational singleness and the ways it preaches the gospel. Tell stories of Christians who have come before us and who remained single for the sake of the kingdom--those who lived full and flourishing lives not in spite of the singleness, but in and through their singleness. From the Bible:

Jesus, Paul, Anna, Jeremiah, Daniel, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist (Jesus's brother), Barnabas, Timothy, Elijah, Elisha, Lydia (purple cloth merchant)

Christians from history: Amy Charmichael, Corrie ten Boom, John Stott, John Henry Newman, Henri Nouwen, Mother Teresa, Annie Armstrong, Lottie Moon, Chris Mullins, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ida Scudder, Gladys Aylwayd, Lillian Trasher, Mary Slessor, Mildred Cable, Samuel Zwemer, George Washington Carver, etc.)

“And you know, neither one is better than the other. People who get married and people who stay single so they can better serve Jesus are both doing what God told them to do and they both serve the Church. We need people who are married, and we need people who stay single.”

Relational Vocations, Age 12+

Work one or more of these questions into a conversation about relationships.

What is a vocation?

“God designed two best ways for us to enjoy intimacy in the context of family: Christian marriage and vocational singleness. A Christian vocation is a calling with a specific design for a specific purpose with a specific provision. When we see our relational state (that is, being married or remaining single) as a vocation, we (hopefully) take it more seriously and are more likely to put time and effort into figuring out which one we're called to rather than taking the one that seems most comfortable or to afford us the most pleasure or freedom.”

Is Christian marriage or vocational singleness better?

“Neither is better. Both are difficult and both are full of joy. Both provide us with deep, intimate, committed family. Both have specific kingdom purposes. Unfortunately, our culture and even the Church often values marriage more than it values vocational singleness. We tend to think that we need romance, that we need a sexual partner to make us feel whole. But God never promised those things to us, and those who give up marriage, romance, sex, and biological children for the sake of the gospel are doing really important kingdom work. We need them in our church family, and I hope the Church will soon see that vocational singleness is an equal calling to marriage.”

Parents, be truthful about how the Church generally views marriage. Include ways your own local church is upholding or not upholding vocational singleness as equal to the calling of marriage and how your church treats the unmarried, both in policy and in unspoken expectations.

Make sure your children understand that marriage is not only for straight people--God does call some gay people into a mixed-orientation marriage. And ensure your children know vocational singleness is not only for gay people or those with a rare, special gift of singleness--God can call anyone He wishes into vocational singleness for the sake of His kingdom.

What is Christian marriage?

“Christian marriage is a lifetime commitment between one man and one woman to enjoy intimacy with each other, raise children, and embody the gospel for each other and the world. Did you notice that nowhere in that explanation is anything about romance or sex? That’s because marriage isn’t about finding a romantic partner or a satisfying sex life. God isn’t against romance between a husband and wife, and He’s pro-sex. He did create sex, after all. But those aren’t the purposes of marriage.

“Marriage is demanding. It requires sacrificing our wants and even our needs sometimes on behalf of the person we married. It requires commitment when we’d rather not. And it is an invitation to love someone who will, many times, not deserve our love. It’s also an invitation to be repeatedly wounded and repeatedly forgive.

“The call to Christian marriage is not a call to satisfy our own interests, needs, wants, and desires. It is a commitment to have all of our interests, needs, wants, and desires redirected and rightly ordered in Christ.”

Take courage to talk about the tough passages in Scripture where marriages don’t so easily align with our preconceived (romantic) ideas about biblical marriage. (Hosea and Gomer, anyone?) God can call anyone to marriage, and He can choose to display the gospel through that marriage in any way that He chooses.

What is vocational singleness?

“Vocational singleness is a lifetime calling to singleness for the sake of the kingdom. What does that mean? Well, it means that God intends for those in vocational singleness to use their time, since they’re not raising children, to do kingdom work that parents don’t have the time and energy to do. Vocational singleness also teaches the gospel in unique ways. When we see the lives of people who have committed themselves to singleness for the sake of the gospel, we are seeing a picture of Christ’s love for the Church and we’re reminded to look to Christ, not a romantic partner, for completion. AND did you know that in the New Heavens and the New Earth no one will be married?! Nope, no one. So those who are vocationally single give us hope that one day we won’t have to compete for anyone’s love or affection. One day our body will join Christ’s. It is then that we will meet our Soulmate, and it is then that we will know and be fully known, body, mind, and soul.”

You can see in that example how you want to add more information, more nuance to the conversations as your kids age, but you definitely want to start early so that the conversations with your pre-teens and teens have a solid foundation to build on.

Sin and Brokenness, Ages 2-6

“We talked earlier about how brokenness and sin will affect all of our relationships, even our friendships and our families. I want to explain how brokenness and sin are different. When I say ‘sin,’ I’m talking about when we disobey God’s law. If I lie to you, I have sinned against God and you. But when I say ‘brokenness’ I mean what happened when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve. ‘God’s creation would start to unravel, and come undone, and go wrong’ (Jesus Storybook Bible). The world is broken; that’s the reason we have destructive weather, disease, suffering, death, and more. A brokenness isn’t us choosing to disobey. Women who can’t have babies, people who are sick, people who are blind or deaf-- none of those are chosen by the person who experiences them. When you experience brokenness in your life, I want you to know that it’s not your fault and I hope you’ll tell me about it.”

Sin and Brokenness, Ages 7-11

“We’ve talked before about how brokenness and sin will affect all of our relationships, even our friendships and our families. I want to explain how brokenness and sin are different. When I say ‘sin,’ I mean a willful disobeying of God’s law. If I lie to you, I have sinned against God and you. But when I say ‘brokenness’ I mean what happened when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve. ‘God’s creation would start to unravel,

and come undone, and go wrong' (Jesus Storybook Bible). The world is broken; that's the reason we have destructive weather, disease, suffering, death, and more. A brokenness isn't a willful disobedience on our part. Women who can't have babies, people who are sick, people who are blind or deaf-- none of those are chosen by the person who experiences them. When you experience brokenness in your life, I want you to know that it's not your fault, and I hope you'll tell me about it.

"I want to talk to you for a minute about how sin and brokenness can show up in your life, especially in your relationships, because, unfortunately, brokenness will affect your life at some point. Even when we're faithful and love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, the sin of others and the brokenness of our own body and the world we live in can harm you and make your life painful. I don't want you to have to face that pain alone. If you ever want to share but you have a difficult time, you could say, 'Hey, Mommy, do you remember that weird conversation we had about God and relationships? I need your help but I don't know how to say it.' And I'll be right here to listen to you.

"So there are lots of ways sin and brokenness can affect our relationships. You can sin (willfully disobey God's commands) against others by thinking someone's appearance is more important than their character, by making inappropriate jokes, or by choosing to ignore someone when they tell you 'no.'

"Someone else could sin against you by thinking that your appearance is more important than your character, by touching your private parts, by showing you inappropriate pictures, by ignoring you when you say 'no.'

"Sometimes we don't sin, but we do experience unchosen brokenness: the way you see yourself may not fit the body you were born with; you look like a boy/girl, but you don't feel like a boy/girl on the inside. Or maybe you start to feel like you're attracted to boys/girls rather than girls/boys the way other boys/girls your age are. If you ever experience this kind of brokenness in your life, I want you to know that it's not your fault, and I hope you'll tell me about it. All of us have unchosen brokennesses; those are nothing to be ashamed of. I know it's not your fault, and I won't be disappointed in you when you share those with me."

Sin and Brokenness, Ages 12+

"We've talked before about how brokenness and sin will affect all of our relationships, even our friendships and our families. I want to explain how brokenness and sin are different.

"When I say 'sin,' I mean a willful disobeying of God's law. If I lie to you, I have sinned against God and you.

"But when I say 'brokenness' I mean what happened when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve. The world is broken; that's the reason we have destructive

weather, disease, suffering, alienation from other humans, death, and more. A brokenness inside us isn't a willful disobedience on our part, but it's something we're subject to as we live in a fallen world. Experiencing infertility, diabetes, blindness, cancer, mental illness-- none of those are chosen by the person who experiences them; people experience those things because we live in a fallen world.

"When it comes to sexuality--your sexual thoughts, feelings, attractions, and behaviors--there are many ways we can willfully sin: objectifying someone's physical appearance, making sexual jokes or using sexual slurs, choosing to engage in sexual behavior outside of Christian marriage, masturbation, viewing or making pornography, getting married for the wrong reasons, rape or sexual coercion, adultery, even the way we commonly date here in the U.S. often isn't God-honoring. Christians who are in a Christian marriage can also sin sexually: selfishly seeking self-gratifying sexual pleasure from your spouse is a sin; using your spouse to 'complete' you or idolizing your marriage is a sin.

"We can be the victim of someone else's willful sexual sin against us: rape, sexual coercion, intentional pornography exposure at a young age, an adulterous spouse. We can also experience the fallout of sexual sin, even if the sin wasn't against us directly. Children of divorced parents, children or spouses of a pornography addicted person.

"There are also lots of ways our sexuality is bent or broken as a result of the Fall, that isn't willful sin on our part or the result of willful sin of another; these brokennesses are also unchosen: the way you see yourself may not fit the body you were born with; you are a boy/girl, but you don't feel like a boy/girl on the inside. This is called gender dysphoria. Or maybe you start to feel like you're attracted to boys/girls rather than girls/boys the way other boys/girls your age are. This is called same-sex attraction. Sometimes we say that people who experience same-sex attraction are gay.

Temptations to lust, believing that sex and romance are necessary to be a whole human, becoming a widow(er), or experiencing infertility. These are all ways we, as humans, can experience broken sexuality that comes from being born into a broken world. If you ever experience this kind of brokenness in your life, I want you to know that it's not your fault and I hope you'll tell me about it. I will not be disappointed or upset when you share these brokennesses with me.

"And lastly I want you to know that you might make mistakes as you begin to experience sexuality and sexual feelings. I know that you long to please God and please me, your parent, but it's really difficult. I get that. And I don't want you to be afraid to share with me, even those mistakes. Making sense of all this alone can be really scary and lonely; I'm here whenever you have questions. If you ever want to share, but you're having a difficult time you could say something like, 'Hey, Mom, do you remember that weird conversation we had about God and brokenness? I need your help, but I don't know how to say it.' I'll remember, and I'll be here to listen to whatever you have to say."