

6 Ways to Teach Teens About Real Romance That Honors Christ

In 18 years of youth ministry, my husband and I learned a lot about teens falling in love. In fact, I've enjoyed watching countless couples fall in love. I consider it a perk of being in ministry! I especially loved observing God's blessing on those who honored Christ in their romance. I can honestly attest to the value of exposing our children to real-life love stories that glorified Christ. Our children's idea of godly romance was strongly influenced by watching couples who loved God and obeyed His plan for their love lives.

In a generation where the culture has stolen real romance, and when it comes to sex, anything goes, we must look for opportunities to talk to our teens and model for them love that brings glory to God. How can we expose them to romance that honors Christ? As a parent, you must realize that teaching your kids a biblical view of romance is so much more than just having "the talk."

1. Acknowledge their longing to be in love. It's tempting to tell your pimply-faced adolescent, *"You're too young to have those feelings."* But a wise parent will listen to them share their heart. If you shut them down, they'll still have those feelings, they just won't tell you about it. You'll also forfeit the opportunity to guide their thinking toward purity and biblical romance.

2. Talk plainly to them about sex. Equip them for purity. How far is too far? Bottom line: It's all sex. Short of intercourse, everything that couples attempt to do outside of marriage is foreplay. There's no way around it. Your kids are naive when they're messing around in the back seat of a

car, telling themselves, *I'll know when to stop. I can handle this.* Help them understand they are engaged in foreplay, their minds are preparing their bodies for intercourse, and eventually they will give in to sex before marriage.

- **Sex is Amazing.** In an attempt to defer your child's interest in sex, to sidestep the idea of how pleasurable sex can be will only serve to frustrate them. Rather, acknowledge how intercourse and all that leads up to the act is extremely enjoyable and sanctioned by God for married couples to enjoy. Equipping your teen to understand how God made their bodies to enjoy sex (within the safety of His plan) will keep them from one day being surprised by how much they long for physical intimacy with a person they come to have feelings for.
- **Pornography is sex.** Jesus said it's as much a sin to engage in premarital sex as lusting over it. Help your teens realize how porn will bring long term consequences that will steal their sexual enjoyment in the marriage bed. In *Real Life Romance*, I share one man's story. Chuck was raised in a Christian home, but he fooled himself to think looking at pornography would keep him from having sex until he got married. What Chuck failed to realize was viewing porn became an addiction that would not let go of him once he married.
- **You can be pure again.** God promises, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18b). If your child has been sexually active, hold out the hope of Jesus and the purity He offers to all who cry out to Him in repentance and turn from their sin.
- **It is possible to wait although culture says everyone is having sex.** God's remnant is remaining pure until marriage, and He is blessing a whole new generation for their obedience. Exposing your kids to godly young adults who are waiting until marriage will speak more to them than your words.

3. Expose them to real romance. Beginning with your own marriage, show your kids how romance in marriage is the norm, rather than the exception. Expose your kids to couples in your church who are courting in a way that honors Christ. This helps them believe purity really is possible, contrary to what the world would have them think.

If you're a divorced or single parent, don't point out all the ways your ex-spouse/their other parent failed you in the relationship. Instead, expose your kids to marriages that have grown more deeply in love over the years. The best place to find these godly examples of happy marriages is when you become a part of a church family. This requires regularly attending church, not just popping in on Sundays from time to time.

4. Celebrate true love. Telling your kids stories of how God sovereignly brought two people together to fall in love in a Christ honoring way gives them hope that God is also interested in their happily-ever-after. When they believe that letting God write their love story will guide them to romance with no regrets, they'll be more likely to trust Him and wait on His timing when looking for a spouse.

5. Help them realize their longing to feel loved is normal. God created each of us with a longing to find our worth in who loves us. The problem lies when we look to find our worth in how well a significant other treats us. The aching we have to feel treasured can only be satisfied when we realize that God loves us so much that He sent His Son to purchase us for Himself. The intimacy with the Creator was stolen away when mankind sinned in the garden. From then on, we all search for love in the wrong places. God is the only answer to the longing of our hearts.

6. Find someone who loves God more than they love you, and they'll be able to love you with His selfless love. The Bible instructs believers not to marry unbelievers. While it's easy

to tell our kids, “just don’t marry a non-believer,” it’s more valuable to explain to them *why*. One very important reason is that the only people who have the capacity to love others with Christ’s selfless love are those whose hearts have been transformed by the Holy Spirit.

We regularly told our own children as well as our youth ministry kids, “Marry someone who loves Jesus more than they love you, and you’re on the right track to a marriage that will last a lifetime.”

Telling our kids how not to feel will do nothing to guide their hearts. But exposing them to real, Christ-honoring romance will kindle a spark of hope that God really is sovereign over romance and love.

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Stoppe is the author of Moms Raising Sons to be Men, which mentors thousands of moms to guide sons toward a no-regrets life, If My Husband Would Change, I’d Be Happy & Other Myths Wives Believe, helping countless women build no-regrets marriages and Real-Life Romance, a collection of real-life love stories. Her latest release is The Marriage Mentor, written with her husband, Steve.

Visit Rhonda Stoppe’s website for more resources on love, marriage and parenting. She is also active on YouTube (Rhonda Stoppe No Regrets Woman), Facebook (RhondaStoppeNoRegretsWoman) and on Twitter (@RhondaStoppe).