

What Every Parent Can Learn From Josh Duggar's Fall

Hackers have recently released detailed data on users of Ashley Madison, a website committed to helping married people have affairs. As you would expect, people are searching the data for names of famous people who used the site.

I just read the first of what will likely be many heartbreaking stories. Apparently, Josh Duggar had a few profiles on the site and has publicly admitted to seeking out affairs. This sad story just keeps getting sadder.

Others will certainly crucify Josh over this latest hypocrisy. I have no interest in doing that. This man and his family desperately need our prayers. My hope is that his life and marriage will be fully restored as only our God can do. Seriously, we need to pray.

As Parents, We Need to Learn Something

Being in the public eye means that your life is watched closely. Your joys are public, and your failures even more so. Celebrities may not like this, but it's just the way it is. Normal folks like you and me can either watch in horror or we can use the life lessons of others to gain valuable lessons for our own lives.

What do we know about Josh? He struggled with issues of a sexual nature when he was young. His parents tried to get him some help. More than a decade later, he is still struggling. This is not uncommon.

Here's a Takeaway That Every Parent Should Consider

Jenifer and I have committed ourselves to sounding a wake-up call to parents about the long-term effects of early sexual

behavior in young people. Instead of common thinking that our kids need to “sow their wild oats” when they are young, research suggests that the behaviors, addictions and poor choices of our developmental years stay with us. God can always help us to overcome the baggage, but it’s never an easy process.

Josh apparently has a stronghold in his life that began when he was young. When you talk to sex addicts, most of them will tell you that their patterns of behavior started in their early teen years with exposure to pornography. For us as parents, it’s far too easy to assume that things like this will happen to somebody else’s kids, but not ours. How can we be so naive?

Sexual Depravity is Everywhere. And It Is Starting Younger and Younger

Not too long ago, a student minister friend of mine informally surveyed a group of 11th and 12th grade boys that were in his discipleship group. In many ways, these 10 boys were the leaders, the “best of the best” within a student ministry of 500 teenagers. He specifically asked them about their struggles with pornography. Every one of them confessed that it was a significant temptation, one that often got the best of them.

This is an issue affecting our kids, not just somebody else’s.

Dr. Chap Clark of the Fuller Youth Institute, says that 60 percent of teen boys in America are addicted to porn. He defined “addicted” as three visits per week to a porn site at one hour per visit. He also suggested that in upper-class areas where Internet access was highly prevalent, the number might be as **high as 80 percent**.

Parents Have to Do Something!

None of us can afford to sit idly by. We must be diligent to

coach our kids on healthy sexuality. We must tell them that it is precious, beautiful and worth saving for marriage. We must share with them about the addictive dangers of porn. Beyond the “just say no” language of many, we have to have frequent, relevant and usually awkward conversations about what it looks like to choose God’s best in a world that commonly chooses poorly.

At INFO for Families, we will continue to champion this message. Sadly, the parents and even churches who are embracing what we have to say are still in the minority. Sadder still, I think that many will have to face a story like Duggar’s in their own family’s life before they wake up and do something.

Don’t let this be you. Talk to your kids. (Our book, *The Talks*, can help you.) Give them the knowledge, wisdom and understanding they need *now* so that they can navigate their sexuality in healthy, God-honoring ways.

If you think the parents of your church, school or community group could use some help with this issue, find out more about our Critical Conversations event.

Barrett Johnson *leads a national parachurch family ministry and blogs at . He recently released his second book, Your Imperfect and Normal Family.*