

What Nobody is Saying About the Duggar Scandal

The internet is saturated with posts attempting to answer all the questions about the Duggar situation. In the midst of the news, analysis, and theological discussions, I see few people discussing one critical topic: PREVENTION.

Most people would agree that Josh Duggar was raised in a conservative Christian home where the kids are raised with a conservative view of sexuality. There is apparently minimal exposure to TV and the “ways of the world.” You would think, by default, that Josh would know better than to do the things that he has confessed to doing.

But how would he know they were wrong if he weren't specifically taught that they were wrong? Sure, he may have had some sense that it was a bad thing, but how would an immature teenager realize the far-reaching significance of what he was doing? What if no one in his life had never told him?

How will our boys (and girls) know that some forms of physical touch are entirely inappropriate? And probably hurtful? And, in many cases, illegal?

Troubled that our world's view of sexuality is getting farther and farther from God's design, my wife and I started a non-profit to sound a wake up call. Our experience at . for Families has been that most parents still run from discussing sexual issues with their children and teenagers. Sure, they may have “the talk,” but they don't get serious about giving

their kids practical parameters for avoiding common pitfalls. These parents don't realize how devastating the brokenness in our world is until someone close to them is "broken." It's much easier to assume that their kids would never dream of doing something wrong.

But how will our kids know certain things are wrong if they aren't specifically taught that these things are wrong?

Sadly, we encounter broken people all the time. All you have to do is hang up a shingle that says you're willing to help families who have been impacted by sexual sin and the church will (secretly) come running to your door.

We talk to men who have been addicted to porn *since they were young teenagers*. They hate it more than anything. They wish they could stop. As teens, they assumed that getting married would solve their porn problems. I haven't met a single one who says it has. Chap Clark of the Fuller Youth Institute claims that more than 60% of our boys are addicted. These aren't someone else's kids. They are ours.

We know young men whose are classified as sex offenders because of one mistake made in their late teens. Something as simple as the sexual encounter a 19 year-old has with his 16 year-old girlfriend can ruin a life. If the relationship goes south, and she cries foul, he is guilty of statutory rape. And now he'll be documented as a sex offender for life.

And, to bring this back to the Duggar controversy...

We talk to parents whose kids have acted out sexually on others. It might be someone at school or it might be one of their siblings. These are not twisted children from dysfunctional homes. They are from solid and well-intentioned families. (That is why the Duggar situation, while certainly

horrific, did not shock me.)

Those at highest risk to be abusers are those who have abuse in their own pasts. But what makes a good kid raised in a home free of abuse do something so evil? ***My theory is that it's lack of information.*** They don't know how wrong it is. They are simply curious. Add to that even a minimal amount of porn exposure and their curiosity is intensified.

Parents absolutely cannot afford to bypass talking about these issues. We must train our kids to protect themselves from abuse. We must also teach our kids what types of behaviors inadvertently make them an abuser.

They won't know it's wrong unless we teach them it is wrong.

What Should a Parent Do?

You can't afford to be passive, so start by getting your head out of the sand. **The Talks**, our book designed to help parents equip their kids to navigate their sexuality, was written to provide practical help. It will hold your hand through the key conversations you need to have about this stuff. We also have created a series of blog posts that give brief lists of what every kid at five key developmental levels need to know about sex. You could start there.

Beyond that, there are some essentials that every parent must do:

1. Face the Facts. These issues can and will affect your kids. No family is immune. The responsibility for educating and equipping falls squarely on your shoulders. Don't leave it to someone else.

2. Get a Game Plan. You're going to have to deal with the porn problem. Filters for your computers and smartphones are a starting place. But frank conversations with your kids about the dangers of porn are even more important. Kids are curious,

which is good. Porn can make their curiosity toxic. Get a plan and act on it.

3. Clear the Channels of Communication. For many kids who have questions about their sexuality (or a possible incident of abuse), the last place they would go is to their parents. Why? Because the parents have not invited the kids into the conversation. It will be taboo as long as mom and dad stay silent. So have some guts and broach the subject with your kids.

4. Talk About Protecting. Remind your children and teens that nobody has the right to touch them without their permission; especially in areas covered by a swimsuit. Period. Let them know that someone might do that and then make threats that they will get in trouble if they tell anybody. Tell your kids that anyone who does that cannot be trusted. Tell them that they can tell you anything and you will always protect them.

5. Talk About Boundaries. As much as I'm worried about my kids being abused, the Duggar situation reminds us that we need to train our kids not to inadvertently become abusers. Teach them what is appropriate and what is not. This will require you to say things to your kids as blunt as, "You can never EVER touch your sister/brother there." Failure to give clear parameters about expectations can result in foolish behaviors in any area of our lives. It's just that the stakes are so much higher in the sexual realm.

6. Be On Guard. Avoid situations where you suspect your kids might not be secure. (We don't do sleepovers until our kids are older and only then if we know the family extremely well.) Watch for irregular behaviors in your kids. Be aware if the tone of one of your kids' relationships changes. If you sense something is wrong, something might be wrong. It may be time for a conversation.

7. Pray Your Guts Out. No lengthy commentary here. Just pray

for the protection of your kids and for wisdom as they discover God's gift of sexuality. And don't forget to listen to God's still, small voice. He loves you and wants to tell you what to do.

A final word about those whose lives have been devastated by sexual sin...

We have a God of extravagant love who forgives the actions of repentant sinners who run to Him for grace and mercy. I think Josh Duggar knows that.

We have a God of endless compassion who is able to heal the scars of innocents who have been wounded by others. I hope any girl that Duggar abused is walking in that.

But we also have a God of holiness and truth, who calls us to flee temptation, prepare ourselves not to sin, and to live lives of righteousness. That means we have to talk openly about it.

While we certainly cannot eradicate sin and its effects from our children's lives, we also shouldn't passively facilitate its power. Let's step in to the gap with our kids and help them to know some simple parameters of what is right and what is wrong, even if they are largely innocent about the complexities of human sexuality.

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