

# PARENT CONVERSATIONS

I had almost as much trouble deciding what to write to introduce this topic as actually talking about it with my kids. I guess that's why I appreciate what the authors shared. It's comforting to know that talking about sex is a struggle for most parents and to be reminded that just because it's difficult doesn't mean that we shouldn't do it.

—Nicole Balza

## WHAT ARE DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE WAYS OF TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT SEX?

I DO THREE things that make my kids cringe:

1. I share my music. They just can't handle that their dad's music is better than theirs. I try to let them know it's not their fault.
2. I text certain acronyms. They may be right on this one. I once thought "LOL" meant "Lots of Love!" It actually means "Laugh Out Loud!" It makes sense now why feelings were hurt when they shared something serious, and I responded with "LOL."
3. When I talk about "the birds and the bees." Honestly, I cringe too. I try to avoid it like my kids avoid my music.

**Are you comfortable talking about sex? Parents rarely are.** This is why many of us never had parents who gave "the talk" and others experienced a one-time, one-way conversation that was just plain awkward (and hopefully short!).

I'm not sure how you feel about talking about sexuality and gender with your kids, but I'm praying we all find a way to do it. And not just one conversation but countless conversations from early on. Yes, countless!

For one, God talks about sex in Scripture. Just consider how he talks so purposefully about it for marriage in Genesis, so positively about it in Song of Songs, and so protectively over it in the Sixth Commandment in Exodus.

Second, our culture is so overly sexualized that if we don't talk about God's gift of sex and gender at home or in the church regularly, the internet, our kids' classmates, and all sorts of ungody influences will. Sadly, when they do, they will only hurt and destroy.

(Did you know that some researchers have found that not talking about sex at home or leaving the impression that it is shameful or dirty to discuss can be a predictor for sexual addiction later in life?)

It's so important that parents primarily—but also church leaders—help disciple youth first and foremost and regularly on these matters. It's also critical that we help our children in their struggles against the devil, the world, and their sinful nature, which are intent on corrupting them.

**So where do we begin? A good place is to ask your pastor or trusted Christian friends for any thoughts and resources they may have.** One resource I will offer is a video series at [myfamilytable.org](http://myfamilytable.org). It's my review of a book by Julia Sadusky, a Christian and professional counselor, titled *Start Talking to Your Kids About Sex*. In a 13-part video series, I walk viewers through each chapter of this book, which includes topics such as proper terminology, normal exploration, sleepovers, LGBTQ matters, and more. Don't worry about the subtitle—"A Practical Guide for Catholics"—I do provide a Lutheran critique and explanation.

I guess what I'm really saying is that although I'd like to avoid talking to my kids about sex, I know that I can't. So I pray that God gives us the courage to talk through these topics with our children.



Bill Monday and his wife, Lori, both serve at 922 Ministries in Appleton, Wis. Bill is pastor of family discipleship. Their family includes four children ages 13 to 21.

A FEW YEARS AGO, some of my friends came to me and asked if I could have “the talk” with their children. They weren’t sure how to approach it, and they thought that with my counseling background I might know what to do. I told them that I think it is really important for parents themselves to teach their children about sex. Then I invited them to come over for an evening and I would give them some tips on how to do it. Word about it got around, and that night I ended up with a houseful of parents, some I had never met!

I realized then that parents are eager for help with these conversations, and I continue to give well-attended presentations on this topic. Here are some tips I share.

### USE ANATOMICALLY CORRECT TERMS

Even before your children can talk, use actual names for body parts. Just as we don’t teach children cutesy substitute terms for “eyes, ears, and nose,” there’s no need to talk about a “pee-pee” instead of a penis. Of course, we can talk with our children as they get older about using discretion in how and when we talk about our sexual parts. But avoiding the names can be confusing and instill a sense of shame at an early age. And there is nothing shameful about the amazing way God made our bodies!

### ANSWER QUESTIONS HONESTLY

When we were watching a movie about Jesus’ birth, my then five-year-old wondered why Joseph might be mad if he found out Mary was having a baby. I said that it takes a man and a woman to have a baby and Joseph might think Mary liked another man. That satisfied her for about a minute until she blurted out, “Wait! Why does it take a man AND a woman?!”

It is normal for children to have questions related to sexuality. Resist the temptation to talk about storks and instead answer them honestly. Use a matter-of-fact tone and let your child know that his or her questions are always welcome. Share what you are comfortable with in the moment or give the answer I gave my daughter: “That’s such a great question! We’re going to learn about it by reading a special book when you’re a little older. That will be fun!”

### START EARLY

It may surprise you to hear the suggestion that it is “developmentally appropriate” to teach your child about sexual intercourse as young as age 6 and certainly by age 10. But consider this: You as a parent

## LUKE GILKERSON’S SERIES, THE TALK

*The Talk: 7 Lessons to Introduce Your Child to Biblical Sexuality (for ages 6-10)*

*Changes: 7 Biblical Lessons to Make Sense of Puberty (for ages 8-12)*

*Relationships: 11 Lessons to Give Kids a Greater Understanding of Biblical Sexuality (for ages 11-14)*

want to be the first person to introduce your child to this topic. In our sex-saturated culture, children hear about sex very early on from a variety of sources—and the messages they get are often incorrect and certainly not Bible-based. We can’t afford to stay silent on the subject. We want our children to know that God created us uniquely as men and women with different sexual parts. We want them to know that he gave us sexual intercourse as a wonderful gift for husbands and wives so they can have children, grow closer to each other, and enjoy each other. We want them to know that there are sexual sins to stay away from and give them resources to do that, and we want them to know that Jesus forgives all.

### GET HELP

If you want more guidance on how to have these conversations, there are wonderful Bible-based resources out there. My favorite is a series by Luke Gilkerson that I have used with all my children (see sidebar). It gives guidelines, Scripture references, and even a word-for-word script for each chapter if you have no idea what to say.

Many parents I have talked to either never heard from their parents about this topic or were given only negative messages meant to scare and deter. We can bless our children by sharing the truth about God’s wonderful gift of sexuality as we take the opportunity to “bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).



Sarah Reik and her husband, Dan, are raising four children in Jackson, Wisconsin. Sarah is a licensed professional counselor with Christian Family Solutions. To learn more about her presentation “The Talk: Teaching Our Children About God’s Gift of Sex,” contact her at sarahreik@hotmail.com.

Interested in more? Visit [forwardinchrist.net/parents](http://forwardinchrist.net/parents) for more parenting resources, including articles, podcasts, and videos.

