

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

7-2-2015

Birds and the Bees

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Recommended Citation

Olson, E. (2015). Birds and the Bees. Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/283

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Birds and the Bees

Abstract

"God never intended sex to be a 'dirty' topic."

Posting about age-appropriate sex education for children from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/the-birds-and-the-bees/>

Keywords

In All Things, sex instruction, sex, children, human reproduction

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

The Birds and the Bees

 [all in allthings.org/the-birds-and-the-bees/](https://allthings.org/the-birds-and-the-bees/)

Erin Olson

I was that kid. I was the one who thought I had all the answers about sex, sexuality, and puberty. I was kind of a know-it-all who proudly attempted to answer my friends' questions about anything related to their changing bodies and changing interests in the opposite sex. Because I was one of the first girls I knew to go through puberty and because my mom was a nurse, I thought that made me the resident expert on all of these things. I cringe to think about the things I taught my friends about puberty and sex because I know my knowledge on the subject was definitely limited and, in many areas, incorrect.

Every spring in one of my junior-level social work classes we talk about what kind of sex education my students received. This activity is always eye-opening both for me and the students as we realize that there is very little consistency when it comes to sex education. There are always a few students who received all their knowledge about sex from their middle or high school, but even then there is significant variation within the comprehensiveness of information provided at school. Quite a few students say the only information they received about sex and puberty at school was confined to one night where the boys learned about their body changes and the girls learned about theirs. I've had very few students say that they think they received enough sex education from their parents and quite a few of them have said that their parents told them nothing about sex. Regardless of how much sex education your kids will get at school, it is still so important that they know they can come to you with their questions and concerns about sex and their bodies.

I am a parent and I'll admit that before I had kids I had planned to be that mom who was very open with her kids from the time they were born. I wanted my kids to know about the "birds and the bees" from a very young age so that the information wouldn't be shocking or disturbing when they heard it later. But I haven't done a good job with that. I have, however, tried to answer my kids' questions as honestly and openly as I can without providing them with more information than they can handle. But when is the right time to have "the talk"? When do we know that our kids are ready to learn about not only their upcoming bodily changes, but also about intercourse and sexuality? Here are a few suggestions I hope will be helpful:

Talk About How God Created Sexuality and His Plan for It

Just as my colleague Neal DeRoo said in his recent [iAt article](#), God created sexuality and he cares about how we use our sexuality and sex to glorify Him. This can truly shape the nature of our discussions about sex both with our kids and with other people. God never intended sex to be a "dirty" topic. He intended for it to be a beautiful piece of his creation—something that can both bring us pleasure and also bring Him glory. This is important for our kids to understand and know and can hopefully create an open, honest environment for questions and discussions as our kids become more curious and interested in sex and sexuality.

Tell Them About Your Own Values and Attitudes About Sex and Sexuality

So many times in the media and in everyday life, sex and sexuality are portrayed in skewed and broken ways. We need to display an alternative perspective on sex that is more in line with God's plan. Your kids need to know your own thoughts and attitudes about sex. You were a kid and adolescent once. What did you wish your parents had shared with you? What did you struggle with when you were an adolescent? How has God's plan and design for sexuality shaped your values and attitudes? What attitudes and behaviors do you hope they develop and exhibit?

Be Honest and Correct Misunderstandings

Your child may already have some misconceptions about sex and you should give them honest corrections while not shaming them or laughing about their misunderstandings. Ask that they come to you with any questions they might have or fact-check with you any new information they might hear from their friends.

Don't Assume Someone Else Will Talk to Them

Don't assume that someone else will educate your child about sex. Having this discussion may be one of the biggest things you've been dreading since having children, but it has to happen. Even if you know that your children will receive comprehensive sex education from their school, time after time kids point to relationships and conversations with parents as being the most influential on their sexual choices, attitudes, and behaviors.

Start Early

Ideally, this should not be just one talk you check off your list of parenting to-do's as soon as it's over. Your child should learn about sex and sexuality naturally and easily throughout their development. Children notice at a very young age that boys and girls, men and women are anatomically different. You can use that as a time to talk about how and why God created boys and girls differently. Older children can be exposed to sexually explicit television shows and songs even if you are trying to protect them from such things. Use these opportunities to answer your kids' questions about what they've seen and heard. These opportunities can set the stage for open and frank communication later.

Use Real Language

I have to admit that it can be quite funny to hear a two-year-old using anatomically correct language to describe their body parts, but if we teach our kids to use this language then they don't feel embarrassed saying the words "penis" or "vagina" when they're a little older.

Don't Overwhelm Them

If after reading this you're feeling panicky like you've lost too much time and you're worried about what your kids might already know, take a deep breath. It's best not to overwhelm them with too much information at once. So don't try to make up for lost time, but slowly and cautiously try to talk with your kids about what they know and find out what they have questions about.

Talking with your kids about sex and sexuality may feel completely unnatural and uncomfortable to you, but if we want our kids to come to us with their questions and concerns then we need to begin the open communication about this topic as soon as possible. In order to help our kids develop healthy sexual attitudes and behaviors, we need to get rid of the mask of secrecy around sex and let our kids know that sex was created by God to be a beautiful and meaningful part of a relationship.