
 "Let's talk about sex education" 

In recent weeks, there were articles in the local English newspaper on talking to kids about sex. It is worthwhile to take some time on this. Parents used to just 'let things happen' and rarely educate children on this topic. With modern technology like the media (TV, magazines) and the internet, undesirable early exposure to good and bad contents becomes a concern. We may believe that such topics are better heard from parents than elsewhere. Yet we are unsure when an appropriate age is or what content is sufficient. What is appropriate sex education? Should we deliberately teach? Our minds are filled with questions. Some basic key beliefs are in order:

- We believe sex education belongs in the family. Schools, churches, nor the media are not the most suitable sources of such information;
- We believe in delaying children's exposure to such content via the internet and mass media (that includes the movies we watch, magazines we read);
- The pollination process of the flower can be the foundation of sex education. We can gradually use that as a parallel for introducing human reproduction. There is however, no necessity for any explicit, detailed description;
- Building parental-child relationships is crucial to ensure that our children perceive our acceptance of their failures and would come to us for any issues.

Parental example is crucial. As parents, we hope that our children can preserve physical intimacy till marriage, even the first kiss – which is probably unheard of. But why not? Daily decisions like the movies we watch, magazines we read, the way we dress going out and at home etc, reflect our attitudes and would influence our children's view towards sex. Take movie watching. Certain movies (or advertisements) are lewd and inappropriate for even 'children' at 70! In Singapore, such 'openness' propagate dressings that reveal too much, sex before marriage and cohabitation,

reflecting an unhealthy, disheartening change. If we watch them together with our children and do not act or turn away, they would deem these acceptable. A saying states "what parents allow in moderation, children do in excess" – worth pondering over.

Another touchy subject – lady's dressing. Fashion states a 'wear less is more' concept, even children's wear - little girls may be cute, ladies sexy, but women may become revealing too much! If we really ponder, these dressings are usually a selfish attempt to show off. If we are uncomfortable with our daughters growing up with revealing dressings, we should discourage from young. If we accept 'dressing less', may we suggest we review the implications? Again, if as parents we believe in such 'openness', our children can outshine us in accepting other areas of 'openness'.

Should we educate deliberately? The flower pollination is a basic start and we can relate the parallel as our children grow. Girls starting their menses and boys beginning voice changes are also opportunities to teach them to respect the opposite sex, to keep a distance and not be alone with them. Share that kissing is reserved for the marriage day – setting high standards can mean that even if we miss, we would be near the 'high standard'. No necessity to be explicit.

The local secondary school text book does have a small section that is a little explicit but most materials are anatomical in nature. If our attitudes are right, chances are that some bad exposure occasionally would be harmless.

What if we already revealed too early or too much and our kids are already teens? If we concentrate on building the relationship and watch our own attitudes through daily decisions like movies and magazines we select, taking opportunities to teach them to respect the opposite sex, even if our children have adopted the world view that pre-marital sex is alright or strayed off path, we can still remedy by continuing to teach what is right, and wait patiently for their repentance and return. We just need to 'speak the truth in love' ^(Ephesians 4:15).