Don’t Wait for the Birds & the Bees

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Our children’s curiosity about sex is natural. Children of all ages (especially teens) have questions about sexuality. Understanding how their bodies work and how to take care of them is a part of building a healthy life. It is therefore necessary that we furnish our children with accurate information about sex and sexuality.

Our children are living in an “information age”. They are exposed to too much information and misinformation from the media and the internet regarding sex. While God gave Adam & Eve instructions to “go forth and multiply”, we need to teach our children that procreation was never the only purpose for sex. The sexual experience is not pleasurable by accident. God intended that sexual union also provide intimacy, bonding, companionship and trust within the covenant of marriage. However, we live in a society which has detached the sexual experience from its divine moorings and reduced it to a level way below the dignity with which mankind was created.

Rather than teach abstinence until marriage, sex education in schools teaches them to, “Wait until you feel ready.” However, our task is to encourage our children to be sexually pure. Sexual purity has often been confused with sexual abstinence, but they are not the same thing. The goal for Christians is not just to remain virgins until they are married. Abstinence may be a by-product of purity, but purity involves much more.

The Bible makes it clear that purity is a matter of the mind (see Matthew 5:28). It involves a transformed heart and a commitment to biblical standards in how we use the members of our body. Teaching sexual purity to our children emphasises the truth that their bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit who lives in them by their choice.

Many parents are intimidated and embarrassed by the idea of addressing sexual matters with their children. Some fear that talking about it will stimulate curiosity to experiment, while others just don’t know how to broach the topic. However, we cannot allow our discomfort to prevent us from addressing so vital a topic with our children. We can take advantage of “teachable moments” as they arise in the natural course of life (see Deuteronomy 6:7). We can share with our children in an age-appropriate manner depending on their level of maturity. It is most important that we cultivate a healthy view of sexuality for ourselves so that the topic does not become taboo in our households.

As parents we must be the first and primary sexual health educators of children because the question is not whether they will get information about sex, but HOW and WHEN? We should be proactive in educating ourselves about child development and sexuality, but we should not expect to be the oracle of all knowledge on the subject. Our task is to become an ‘askable’ parent. Someone who is approachable for information and guidance. Someone who will listen and respond to inquiries in a non-judgemental, open and accurate manner. An ‘askable' parent is a ‘secure base’ person who can affirm human sexuality as a valuable gift and create a safe

environment in which our children can ask their questions. Research indicates that children whose parents clearly communicate their values to them are less likely to engage in inappropriate sexual activity. We cannot afford to drag our feet when it comes to our children's sexual education. The time is now and as parents, we are definitely the people.