

Mother's Encouragement Group
April 25, 2013

Thirteenth Principle:

Children should learn about sex from their parents, but hardly ever do! Song of Songs 1:2: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine...."

Today's subject is delicate and dangerous, wonderful and scary, full of mystery, joy and above all, pleasure. I am speaking about sex and the teaching of it to our children.

a) We have said that marriage is the backdrop for family life and the context in which the nurturing of our children takes place. It is the underlying pleasure, the fun, the security and happiness for all that goes on in our home. It is the model that children see, the place they will want to go; it is natural for them to want to be "just like mommy & daddy." Marriage is many things, isn't it, and the further we go into life's journey together the more facets of marriage we see and enjoy: conversation, shared tastes and experiences, hobbies, humor, prayer, even work and all of it is much more fun because there are two of you sharing it. Human beings are so complicated that it's not hard to learn something new about one's spouse even after years of living together. But there is one thing that, if it is not present, there is no marriage at all and that, of course, is sex. All the other stuff is gravy--fun and wonderful--but if there is no sex the heart of what marriage is all about is missing. Our Creator made us this way and we see it treated and talked about everywhere in the Bible. It is the way God thought to make more human beings after the first two He had made "from scratch." **Genesis 2:25: "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."**

Rob and I have recently been watching some episodes of *Planet Earth*, the BBC series that explores so many amazing things about our planet that are very little known and very often not understood. One of the things that has impressed me is that every species has its own particular way of pro-creating: a rare kind of camel on the China steppes bangs his bottom with his stubby little tail in an effort to attract the female; an amazingly colorful bird in the Amazon jungle fans his feathers, hops up and down and screams like a banshee to attract his mate; frogs and insects have habits particular to each to fulfill their mandate to have babies and raise young just like themselves; even plant life has its male and female interactions. Rob has often said that God could have made man just like the animals in so many ways: He could have made us to eat grass like the cows and get our nutrition that way instead of giving us complicated taste buds and then providing wonderful things to experience while giving our bodies what they need to live on. In the area of sex, too, He could have made it all so much more mechanical, straightforward, over quickly and on we go. But He didn't. He made it wonderful,

intimate and full of pleasure, meant to increase our love for one another. Animals do not “love” one another and there are very few species that actually find *one* mate and stay with that mate while the little ones are hatched and raised. Man, on the other hand, was made for relationship; God put a hunger in our beings for one another: hunger in our souls and hunger in our bodies and He made that hunger *strong!* What was He thinking?! This thing is wonderful, yes, but also dangerous and very hard to control. Yet we know that everything God made *was very good* and that He was happy with what He had made.

But then, of course, sin came into the world and spoiled what God had made.

Genesis 3:7: “Then the eyes of both [the man and the woman] were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.” Now they were ashamed and one doesn’t have to read very far into Genesis to find that all kinds of sin, and sexual sin, is growing everywhere. **Genesis 6:1-6: “When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose...”**and later on, **“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.”**

Still, it is important to remember that it is not our God’s creation that is bad but the sin that corrupted it and when the Lord gave us His law we need to see it for what it was--kindness and grace, showing mankind how to move forward, how to live happily in the world He had made and how to understand how He made us. I find it amazing that the *only* law God gave us about sex is that it should be within the bonds of marriage. **Exodus 20:14: “You shall not commit adultery.”** We learn elsewhere that a man should only marry a woman (amazing that we should have to take a stand like this but especially in today’s world it must be said) and that those marriage vows ought only to be broken by the death of one of the partners. One might think, with something so powerful in human life that God would have given us a bunch of regulations regarding what may be done and what may not be, but He didn’t. Instead He gave us a whole book of the Bible that does nothing but celebrate sexual love yet does so so chastely that theologians have argued about its meaning for probably centuries. Put yourself in the place of an Israelite family when the **Song of Songs** was being read out: there are the children delighting in the story of a wonderful garden and there are the parents nudging each other and whispering and turning a bit red in the face! All the aphrodisiacs known to them not only mentioned but celebrated. See **Proverbs 5:18-19: “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.”** What is this but the celebration of sex?

In the book *Ten Things Parents Must Teach Their Children (And Learn for Themselves)* Edith Schaeffer has written about each of the Ten Commandments and their

implications for family life. In the chapter entitled *You Shall Not Commit Adultery* she has this to say: “People have separated sex from the oneness of two people, man and woman as husband and wife. They have done this through all history, just as they have separated worship and spirituality from oneness with the true eternal God, the I AM. The rebellion of mankind, human beings, has always existed in these two areas. Both are adultery.” [chapter 7, p.149]

Later on she says: “People who are promiscuous in sex, sleeping with a diversity of others, describe the marvelous feelings they say are so satisfying. Others describe what ought to be felt and point out what people are missing if their experiences or feelings have not measured up. People state that their second or third marriages after divorce are so much better, and that one needs to try again to find sexual satisfaction. There are those who turn away to finding sexual excitement in homosexual or lesbian relationships, and declare that no one has understood what feeling can be like who has not been freed from “binding taboos,” or from “outdated laws” of the past. There are those who seek excitement by going to prostitutes, or engaging in a mixture of highly prepared sex orgies, shows, parties, and bizarre substitutes for anything that they might term normal. The wildly frantic search before old age comes and it is too late drives people into wanting to experience everything of feeling that they have heard about. Adultery follows adultery, and the people whose marriage doesn’t seem to bring a satisfying sexual feeling...are tempted to try to find happiness [elsewhere], which they have become fooled into thinking is one of their basic rights. The whole atmosphere is so filled with babbling and tumult about the need to be fulfilled sexually that even Christians come to think they are being denied something that is their basic right and forget to look into God’s Word for any direction concerning this part of life.”

b) So how do we communicate all the loveliness, wonder *and danger* of sex to our children without scaring them or making them feel guilty about things their bodies will inevitably feel? First of all, it is of utmost importance that your children see a happy marriage that is full of a communication that does not belong to them, that is above them and all around them. The older they become they gradually see evidence of a life in the home that does not include them and if it is a happy life it will make them happy too, eventually desiring it for themselves. Of course this makes it important that your sexual life with your husband is never abandoned, put on a shelf until later but actually cultivated, thought about and cared for. The **Proverbs 5** father says: **“Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?” (vs. 20)** Rob has often said that there is nothing the world knows about sex that the Christian shouldn’t also know and, in building a wall of resistance to any particular sin one must cultivate its opposite virtue. If one has a temper problem, getting angry easily with others, it is patience and forgiveness that must be cultivated. So in the area of sexual desire and fulfillment, if one’s own cup is full, so to speak, the

desire to go elsewhere to satisfy this dangerous drive becomes a moot point. Edith Schaeffer again says, "... 'To avoid having your children steal buns from the bakery, have fresh baked buns waiting for them at home after school.' It is the same kind of practical warning that if marriage is indeed to help people stay away from immorality, then there should be a responsibility taken by each of the two to fulfill each other's needs as much as possible." [p. 159]

This is not to say that there are not seasons of growth, seasons of abstinence and seasons of simply maintaining. This is inevitable when one has small children that place such a drain on one's energy *all the time!* or when nursing makes one's desire for sex plummet or when finding privacy in a small house is difficult. Still, Paul has this to say in **I Corinthians 7:1-5: "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."** Taking what the Bible says altogether then, sex between a husband and his wife should be explored, cultivated and cared for "as long as you both shall live."

Second, to be silent about sex to our children is, simply put, foolishness. This leaves the feelings that happen in our bodies--and will inevitably happen in our children's bodies--unaddressed and therefore accompanied by a feeling of "wrong" especially in children of tender conscience. Not to be talked about? Then surely it ought not to be felt; and if I feel it what's wrong with me? Sex becomes a kind of delicious, mysterious, forbidden subject that begins to carry with it guilt and fear. How can our children possibly know what to do when this comes upon them if their parents have not given them, first of all, the knowledge that these feelings are all part of the way the Lord made us and then provided an open door that welcomes conversation? The danger of the misuse of this gift is not lessened with silence but only becomes greater the closer children get to adulthood. I wish I could tell you that we handled this area of child-rearing very well. The fact is, I was raised with silence and therefore had little understanding of myself, basically blundering through my young adulthood. (This was the old "greek" idea that everything to do with the body is bad and therefore should not be talked about. What?! This is not even logical since my parents talked about plenty of other sins that ought to be avoided--lying, for instance, and stealing.) My mother trusted me by the time I was through high school because she knew that my commitment to Christ was solid. But in the area of sex she really shouldn't have trusted me, given the fact that she had given me no tools with which to face that part of life. I think there are

many in my generation who were raised this way. In my case, the Lord was gracious to me, did really help me and finally gave me a wonderful husband that was right for me but we ought not to presume that this will always be the case. Earlier in **Proverbs 5** we see the father taking his son right down into the Red Light district and showing him the powerful attractions that are there and then telling him that *those* attractions must be resisted **“For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol....Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner....”** (vss 3 & 4) The father does not say the attractions themselves are wrong but only that they should be spent on one’s own wife and if the son is not yet married then he must wait until he is. Tweaking the passage with a change of pronoun, a mother can change this warning to fit the particular temptations of her girls.

In this area, too, we are our parents’ children and though I wanted to be different with *my* girls, Vangie reminded me that by the time I was courageous enough to have “the talk” with them they had already learned the particulars from their classmates *at Heritage Christian School!!* What I was able to do, unlike my parents, was to give them a happy view of sex within marriage and a willingness to talk with them about the particular boys in their lives. So, if my children can begin with the example we were able to give them and then go further in developing their own parenting I will be well-satisfied.

c) Children should not be trusted, even in play, to be pure in this area just because they are growing up in the church, play with Christian friends and have Christian parents. Don’t fall into the trap of thinking, “Oh *my* children would never do that!” Children are curious and they play about everything they see in the adult life around them. My children often played “church” (somehow it was always Bryonie who was the preacher!) but they also played “doctor” and, Vange again told me, they played it with the kids of a Christian family that our kids played with a lot. I remember coming upon my three girls stripped down to their underwear doing I know not what but thinking to myself that I wanted to stop this play but without getting angry. The point is that mommy needs to know what the children are doing *all* the time; otherwise you can’t weigh in on their behavior.

We live in a society that is over-sexed and full of the consequences of the sexual revolution of the sixties which makes Christians seem odder and odder in a world of “free” sex. We are considered “repressed,” “closed off,” even sick. This means that our children are even more vulnerable than we were as children--vulnerable not only to their own sexuality but also to the sexual expression of others in their lives, adults and

children alike. And, I have heard, that puberty is happening especially to girls at younger and younger ages (some would say it is the hormones in the milk we drink!). It is therefore ever more important to teach them what is appropriate and what is not--to give them tools not only to understand what is going on at any particular time but how to think about it rightly and then, what to do about it. A simple statement like, "Honey, *no one* should touch you there" can begin the education of right touching as opposed to wrong touching. Children are resilient but there is behavior that will have lasting effects on their lives--abusive behavior--that they must be protected against at all costs. Again, it is simply foolishness not to face the effects of sin in our lives and the lives of our children, especially in the area of sex which has power to ruin a life either by abusing or by being abused. It is important not to consider ourselves immune to such sins but rather to take steps against them while we can, like removing temptation and then telling your children why you did what you did. I will never forget my own OPC pastor saying to me in a private conversation that if I thought that anyone was not vulnerable to any sin, but especially to the sin of having adulterous thoughts, which of course lead to adulterous actions, then I was not facing the truth about mankind and if one does not face the truth about oneself often one can be in the middle of sin before one knows how he got there. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed," which is what parents need to do for their children.

Yesterday Vangie had a conversation with her little Bryonie about her private parts because she wanted to know why she couldn't run around naked. Vange told her that no one should be looking at her private parts, including her brother. She replied that "It's important to look at your private parts without someone there."!!! Uh, ok...?

Those of you who heard Sunday night's sermon heard about the fourth century preacher John Chrysostom and the beautiful young widow he fell in love with. Both of them had taken vows of chastity and so consummating their love was out of the question. Imagine the difficulty of managing that while carrying on a very close relationship through many years! This is how they did it, so says J.N.D. Kelly in his biography *Golden Mouth*: "They employed a well-organized self-discipline (including, for example, the elaborate formal courtesies by which they distanced themselves from one another) to keep [romantic and sexual attraction] at arm's length." Here is a very practical tool we might instill in our children as they grow up: manners and respect which will include the exercise of *self-control* in all kinds of ways and at many times of the day. We do not have in our culture most of the social niceties evidenced by Jane Austen's novels, for instance, so any inhibitions our children may have when they grow up will have to be instilled by us when they are small.

d) We cannot say enough that God made sex perfect and perfectly wonderful; it is sin that has corrupted it and made it dangerous. Here is Mrs. Schaeffer again: "Have you ever seen the loving care with which a maker of fine wood furniture

gathers wood and seasons it, preparing it for just the right matching of grain in making his chairs and cabinets and tables? Think of someone wanting to warm himself in front of a fire coming and chopping up all that precious oak, walnut, cherry, mahogany, and making a fire in the fireplace as he sits and eats and drinks by the blaze. What a waste!” [p. 156] God meant sex for something wonderful and wonderfully helpful and fun for husbands and wives but sin ruins it and, it is only foolishness not to face the effects of sin in every area of life but especially in this one. Sexual sin has more lasting and powerful effects than any other since it is sin against a body that was created by, and belongs to, God. **I Corinthians 6:13b-20: “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body....Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two shall be one flesh.’ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”**

One last quote from Mrs. Schaeffer: “The truth of what God made us to be in the first place and what He is preparing for us to enjoy in our new bodies needs to be made known. It must have a practical part in influencing our decisions....The sacrifices we need to make to live in line with the commandments of God must be recognized as an integral part of actively believing that the Lord is really coming back, and that one day we will not only rejoice to be in our new bodies, but will stand at the believer’s judgement in our new bodies. And when our child asks us, as in Deut. 6:20-21, ‘What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?’ tell him....”[p.165]

Malachi 2:13b-15: “You cover the Lord’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, ‘Why does he not?’ Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife (or the husband) of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she (he) is your companion and your wife (husband) by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? *Godly offspring*. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife (husband) of your youth.” So, open your mouth and use your words to teach your children what godly sexuality looks like and then live out that godly sexuality in front of them.

We have some great resources, Girls, to help us figure out very practically how and when to talk to our children about sex. Our own Dawn Darby has written some excellent material on

this subject entitled *God, Sex and Your Child: How to Talk to Your Kids About Sexuality and Relationships*. I'm going to let her give you a rundown of what is included here and we can talk about this more next time, if you all would like to do that. Sandy Milton is also going to come for a while today to tell us something of how we can recognize the signs of abuse in a child. Sad to say, this is something we all need to be aware of in the day in which we live.