

# *Talking to Your Kids About Sex*

A collection of blogs from Dr. Juli Slattery to help you navigate conversations about sex and God's design for sexuality with your children.



AUTHENTIC  
INTIMACY

Copyright © 2020 by Authentic Intimacy

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from Authentic Intimacy.

# Table of Contents

---

1. [Pornography & Our Kids](#)
2. [When Your Kids Look at Porn](#)
3. [Parenting Through Weakness](#)

*\* Click on any title above to jump directly to that blog.*

# Pornography & Our Kids

---

In early 2016, our nation was appalled to discover that a city government in Flint, Michigan has been serving their citizens poisonous water for over a year. When concerns were raised, government officials gaffed them off as isolated incidents. Tragically, young children were exposed to lead poisoning that leads to brain damage and other long-term ailments.

Gaining much less press was another alarming trend that continues to gain speed today and is far more reaching than the corrupted water of a city. A study conducted by the NSPCC ChildLine found that 10% of 12-13 year-olds fear that they may be addicted to porn. The ChildLine study also found that 20% of 12-13 year-olds think that watching porn is normal and a part of everyday life. This study is just one piece of evidence demonstrating what we know is happening to our children. Other studies show that adolescents are having sex younger, rougher, and with more partners. The bottom line... our children are daily being exposed to poison. Their smartphones, laptops, game consoles, and televisions consistently pipe in the poison of pornography and sexual exploitation.

There is likely to be no outcry and no government intervention to treat the youngest victims of this poison. They will grow up with a twisted understanding of one of God's greatest gifts to humanity. No doubt, this poison will result in sexual assault, sexual exploitation, broken marriages, sexual dysfunction, and broken lives. But no one is sounding the alarm.

As the mom of three teenage boys, this news doesn't surprise me, but it still alarms me. I know that my children have been exposed to the poison of pornography. I would like to transport my family to the days of Little House on the Prairie, but God has placed us right here in the 21st century. So what can we do to keep our kids safe from this poison? Is there an antidote for what they have already consumed?

## Yell and Scream

Pornography has become such an accepted part of society that few view it as a concern. Although the average wife or mom isn't likely to get an audience with CNN, we impact people every day.

The Old Testament prophets were sometimes referred to as “Watchmen on the Wall.” God called them to sound an alarm and to warn people of a coming disaster. I believe we are each called to be watchmen on the wall. Wherever you have influence, please raise the concern and call out for schools, churches, families, and communities to acknowledge the danger that is eroding our children’s future.

## **Talk to your kids, often!**

My youngest boy is in 7th grade. Because the ChildLine study is about children his age, I told him about it.

“Did you know that a lot of kids your age are already addicted to pornography?”

My son answered, “Wow! That’s sad! But none of my friends are because they are good kids.”

“Well, good kids get addicted to porn too.” I continued our conversation by asking him about when he has seen porn and reminding him about why it is so dangerous. I encouraged him to talk to us any time he sees it.

Will my son always be honest with me about his own experience with porn and other sexual things? Not always. Regardless, I want to do everything I can to share my concerns, to ask questions, and to be a safe place for him to talk.

Talking through these issues with our children is about more than simply issuing a warning. We also need to walk with them when they fall. Discipleship means teaching through all circumstances and every phase of life, including how to handle our own poor and sinful decisions. This gives us the opportunity to make the Gospel tangible and tell our own stories of the goodness of God’s grace and forgiveness.

## **Be a proponent of the real deal**

Porn is a counterfeit. It exploits the powerful beauty of our God-given longings for intimacy and sexual pleasure. The best way to protect against the counterfeit is to exalt the excellence of the real deal. Who wants a McDonald’s hamburger if they could have a NY prime steak? Men and women become addicted to porn at such young ages because they don’t know any better. They are too young to experience or understand the beauty of true intimacy. It falls on the shoulders of parents and mentors to explain and model God’s design for sexuality.

Unfortunately, many parents and mentors have their own warped views of sexuality and marriage.

The ministry of Authentic Intimacy exists to help men and women “reclaim God’s design for intimacy.” Perhaps the most effective way of protecting my children from the poison of junk sex is to have a deep understanding of healthy biblical sexuality. Do my kids know what happens in my bedroom? I sure hope not! However, they are witnessing in our home a very different message from what the world is offering. Imperfect as we are, they have seen the beauty of committed love.

## **Be Nosey**

While your children have the right to some privacy, they do not have the right to electronic devices without filters and accountability. In fact, neither do I! My husband has access to all of my accounts, to my cell phone and computer. I have the same access to his.

It’s loving, responsible, and appropriate to check your kids’ phones, computers, social media, etc.... In our home, we don’t allow cell phones or computers in bedrooms. No one is allowed to lock his or her devices without us having the password. Does this guarantee that nothing will slip past us? Of course not. We aren’t constantly checking each other’s devices, but it promotes an environment of accountability.

I frequently ask the Lord, “God, if there is something one of us is struggling with... something I need to know... will you show me?” I pray this because I can only help my kids if I know what’s going on in their lives.

## **Depend upon Jesus**

My heart grieves for the landslide of sexual chaos in our culture, primarily because I know the wake of pain that will inevitably follow. Yet in the midst of these depressing circumstances, I see some really good news. God often uses our brokenness and destitution to bring us to repentance. Our children won’t make it if all they have of Christianity is a shallow faith. They will need a genuine relationship with God.

Nothing gets our attention like a problem we cannot solve.

The overwhelming devastation of pornography and sexual brokenness unequivocally shows us that we need help. Counselors, psychologists, and rehab centers won't be enough to heal our children. There is one hope...His name is Jesus Christ. He alone is able to bring healing and restoration through our total surrender to his work on the cross of Calvary.

I believe this generation is ripe for revival. The pain and trauma of the sexual chaos will compel our children to seek a genuine source of hope. C. S. Lewis wrote, "We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Unfortunately, the poison of porn is unlikely to stop. In fact, it will undoubtedly continue to worsen as our sexual ethics erode. But that doesn't mean we have to stand by and watch it destroy the future of our children.

## When Your Kids Look at Porn

---

Some days as the mom of three sons, I wish I could be parenting in a different era... one in which cell phones did not exist and comic books were more common than pornography. Yet we do not choose the time and place which God inserts us into history. Pornography and the many sexual consequences associated with it are a regrettable part of the fabric of our society. Unfortunately, I don't believe there is anything we can do to completely shield our children from these dangers. Most experts agree that children living in the western world will see porn. It's not a matter of if, but when.

This depressing conclusion doesn't, however, render us helpless in our preparation and response to seemingly inevitable exposure to sexual poison. In fact, I believe that God can turn every threat to our children into a victory. That victory is called redemption and is expressed through what Joseph said to his brothers thousands of years ago. What Satan means for harm, God can use for good. This is not just some pollyanna-ish statement. We serve a redeeming God and He will have a victory, even if it's not what we envision for our children.

While we pray that our sons and daughters will beat the statistics, we have to be prepared for how we will respond if they don't. Here are three things to keep in mind in preparation for finding your son looking at porn or your daughter sexting her boyfriend.

### **Remember, it's not about you.**

If you discover that your child has made a poor sexual choice, you will likely be overwhelmed with feelings of anger, fear, and failure. You will need a place to express and work through these emotions. However, if you react and parent based on them, you will ultimately be alienating your child instead of giving him or her the needed support, love, and direction. Christian parents often feel as if their children's sexual purity is the ultimate litmus test of their effectiveness in parenting. This paradigm actually makes the issue more about you than about your child. With this mindset, you will make yourself the last place your kids will confide in when they struggle with sexual temptation or fall into sexual sin. Rather than responding to your own emotions, seek wisdom from the Lord and godly counsel to answer the question, "How can I best help my son/daughter right now?"



## **Remember the gospel.**

While the average Christian parent is well-equipped to explain “the gospel,” rarely do we apply the foundational principles of what we believe to practical challenges in parenting. Here’s an example of what I mean. The Bible tells us that we are sinful and rebellious in nature. Given the choice, none of us will choose to worship and serve God. It is only through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that we can be cleansed by sin. So why are we shocked that 13-year-old Josh who goes to youth group and loves his parents still chooses to look at naked girls? When our teenagers choose sin, this gives us the chance to share the message of salvation in a way that intersects with their real-life experiences. God’s grace is just a churchy concept until our children actually encounter it. I believe that the sexual temptations and struggles our sons and daughters face are very practical ways to teach them the truth that they cannot be “good” in their own strength. They need God’s grace and the forgiveness He offers.

## **Remember discipleship.**

Your primary job as a parent is not to raise well-behaved kids who walk down the aisle as virgins. Instead, God has called you to make disciples. What does that mean? It means teaching, modeling, and walking with your children in such a way that they will want to follow Jesus Christ. Discipleship is not primarily about behavior. It’s about the direction of your child’s heart. The goal is not just to keep your kids from sex and porn. It is to shape their hearts and affections to want what is good and hate what is evil. For most of us, at some point that takes staring evil in the face and tasting the consequences of sin. I believe that many of the strongest young men and women of this next generation will not be those who have been sheltered from the offerings of our world, but those who have been disciplined through temptation and the pain of failure.

While you may be alarmed at the shifting landscape of what is considered normal and moral related to sexual choices, let’s be honest in admitting that historically, Christian parents have been limited and ineffective in our approach to teaching about sexual issues. Rarely do I meet a man or woman, even among those who were raised in Christian homes, who were taught a healthy, biblical perspective of sexuality. The current sexual culture demands that parents proactively teach a comprehensive biblical view of sexuality and that conversations about sexuality be integrated into the larger landscape of becoming a follower of Christ. We have to raise the level of our game.

This is why we at Authentic Intimacy are so passionate about teaching sexual discipleship. Our kids will be confronted by porn, sexting, invitations to hook up, and confusion about gender and sexual orientation. It's not a matter of if, but when. And they very likely will make some mistakes in navigating this dangerous terrain. We must put as much effort into walking out the redemptive power of the gospel as we do into the protective measures to guard them from the enemy's schemes.

# Parenting Through Weakness

---

*Dear Juli,*

*I'm the mom of two teenage girls. I know I need to talk to them about sex but honestly, I don't know where to begin. My sex life is a mess. My husband and I have relied on porn in our marriage for years. I have abuse in my past that I've never dealt with. I feel so messed up in my own life ... how can I possibly help my daughters?*

One of the greatest barriers to honest conversations about sex with our kids (especially teens and young adults) is our own sexual brokenness. In one sense, this is a good thing. The pastor or parent who forges ahead with “thou shalt not” while harboring sexual sin is nothing short of a hypocrite. We know from volumes of research that the quickest way to lose your teen is such hypocrisy. Teens and young adults are far more impressed by authenticity than perfection.

While we may feel appropriately hesitant to set boundaries that we ourselves are not following, the answer is not to stay silent while our children wade through the cesspool of pornography, sexting, and sexual experimentation. As a parent, you may be determined to save your children from the pain and bondage you have experienced. But how do you throw a life preserver when you are drowning in the same waters?

## **Become a desperate parent.**

Jesus interacted with parents, like the religious ruler named Jarius, who came to the Lord not for their own salvation, but for the sake of their children. Many parents who lack the faith to pursue God for their own healing will do so because they love their children. In fact, Christians who have fallen away from church and God often return because they want their children to know the spiritual life they themselves once rejected.

A Barna study indicated that seventeen percent of parents reconnected with church and twenty percent of parents got more involved after having children.

Perhaps God has been knocking on your door, inviting you to sexual healing and confession, but you've been unwilling to open that door for your own sake. Would you be willing to believe for the sake of your children?

The enemy would love to keep your family stuck in the bondage of shame, immobilized to pursue the truth and love of Jesus. He's had his way in your home for too long. God desires to bring healing into your life, your marriage, and your family for your children's sake, but also for yours. Remember that you are His child.

## **Be honest without sharing detail.**

I have spoken to many different audiences over years of ministry. Nothing makes me more uneasy than speaking to teenagers. They don't pretend to care or to be listening. If you can't capture them in the first few minutes, they are happy to be entertained by their smartphones and friends while you stammer on with advice and wisdom. I once asked a youth pastor, "What's the secret to speaking to teens?" His reply was simple. "Teens sniff out hypocrisy within 30 seconds. You have to be yourself. They want to see that they can relate to you. If you try to impress them, you'll lose them."

While your sexual brokenness and failures may seem to disqualify you from sexually discipling your teen, the opposite is probably true. Your son or daughter is struggling with sexual questions and temptations. He or she doesn't need an expert to explain how to perfectly navigate these landmines, but rather what to do when one blows up in your face.

Perhaps the greatest credibility comes from honestly sharing what God is teaching you. I would advise against sharing details (your grandfather abused me, I cheated on your mom, I just looked at porn last night) because they will burden your child. But you can authentically share something like, "Sexual struggles have plagued me since I was your age. I'm only now beginning to understand what it means for God to bring healing and freedom. I want to save you from so many years of pain that I have had to walk through."

Authentically sharing with your teen presents you as a safe person to ask questions and share struggles. Not every teen will feel comfortable talking about sexual temptations and thoughts with their parents, but it is critical to keep that invitation open.

## **Remember that you are not the Savior.**

Discipleship can be summed up with this statement, “Follow me as I follow Jesus.” Many of us think of parenting more like, “Follow me as I try to act like Jesus.” There is a subtle but critical difference between those two sentiments.

The power in my child’s life is not how perfectly I try to emulate my Savior, but how consistently I pursue Him. Do they see my weakness leading me to His strength? Do they see my failures pointing to His perfection?

I’m at the stage of parenting in which my sons are leaving home. They are forging their own identity, belief system, and life choices. I don’t want them to be like me. I long for them to be like Jesus. I can’t fix their problems or answer all of their questions or heal their wounds, but I know the One who can.

Paul famously wrote about a “thorn in the flesh,” a messenger from Satan that kept him humble. When he repeatedly asked for God to take it away, the reply was, “My grace is enough for you. My power will be made perfect through your weakness.”

Your children can’t learn from a “perfect” parent. They need to see God’s strength, not yours. Although the accuser may remind you of your failures to discourage you, remember that “boasting in our weakness” points our children to the only One who can save and redeem them.