

Raising Sexually Healthy Kids – Dan Hitz

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Proverbs 22:6 reads, “Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.” The Lord has designed a good plan for the development of a healthy child who will continue to grow into a healthy adult. The principles outlined in Scripture can be helpful to us as parents in raising Biblically sound kids in a world that promotes immorality, and promises happiness if you aren’t “constrained” by the traditional “taboos” of the church.

Knowing the basic steps that the Lord designed for a growing child to pass through, and how the Biblical roles of mother and father can best influence a growing child, can help him or her grow on a strong foundation and be more resilient in the struggle against sexual temptation.

This article will present the stages of development as the Lord designed us to experience them. Of course, we are living in an imperfect world which is influenced by an imperfect culture. There are times when the Lord’s perfect design cannot be carried out even with the best of intentions. It is at those times that we can seek Him for the grace to overcome our challenges and to carry us through the valleys. Although this article presents some specific roles for specific people such as mother and father, there will likely be overlap in the fulfillment of each role. There are also times when one parent may be absent and a single parent has to fulfill the role of the other. Again, we can trust the Lord who promises to be a father to the fatherless and who is willing to comfort us under the shadow of His wings.

From birth to about 18 months the child is focused mainly upon his mother. The Lord designed her to nurture the baby in her womb and to impart a sense of being loved and cared for in the outside world. The gaze of a nursing mother is designed to bond with the child and let him know that he is valued simply for existing. The continued care in feeding, changing diapers, and soothing skinned knees lets him know that his needs will be taken care of and that it is safe to “be” or exist in this world.

From about 18 months to five years the child begins to see life beyond the primary tie with mother and reaches out to bond more with father. He also learns that he is a separate being from mother and can begin to practice some autonomy. This is where a healthy father can encourage the child to continue taking those first few steps towards his arms in spite of the bruises that he has already experienced. When mistakes are made, a healthy father teaches the child how to fix them. A loving father is designed to call the child into the good of who the Lord designed him to be. Not only has the child learned from the mother that it is good to exist in this world, he now learns from the father that he is able to do many things on his own.



Around the age of five, the child then learns to bond with other little children of his or her own gender. As a little boy bonds with other little boys, he learns what it means to be a “good enough” little boy. The little girl learns what it is like to be a “good enough” little girl. *[I use the term “good enough” recognizing that no one is perfect, but in Christ we are all “good enough”.]* They develop gender appropriate interests and continue learning to see things through the lens of their “little boyness” or “little girlness”. During this stage it is common for girls to see boys as “icky” and for boys to see girls as having “cooties”. At this age it isn’t about learning to relate to members of the opposite sex as much as it is to grown into feeling comfortable as a member of one’s own sex. The child grows and is established on the good foundation of his or her own gender.

During adolescence, kids begin to take an interest in the members of the opposite sex. Feeling confident that they are a good enough boy, males can then launch out to take an appropriate Christian interest in getting to know females. The same is true for females. If I am a good enough female who can relate to other good enough girls, I can now take some risks to learn how to relate to good enough males. This step is awkward for both kids and parents as the kids learn to relate to “the other” of their species, and the parents worry that they will not uphold the Christian principles that they tried to instill in their kids. Nevertheless, good parents guide their kids through this stage and continue to speak into their lives. The same gender parent continues to teach the son or daughter what it is like to be a godly man or woman. The opposite gender parent continues to teach the son or daughter how to relate to the other gender. The opposite gender peer helps the male or female learn to apply those principles on a godly, practical level.



In the right season, the Lord designed us to grow beyond relating to the larger group of opposite sex peers and step into a marriage covenant with a single member of the opposite sex. The couple will learn much deeper truths about relating to the opposite gender as they grow in the marriage covenant, and even more as they become mothers and fathers. They will also learn more about themselves and what it means to be a man or woman of God as they teach their own children and grandchildren about life in Christ.

This article is meant to be an introduction to child development and a thorough presentation of this topic is beyond the scope of this article; however, it serves as a launch point for raising sexually healthy kids. It might also help us to see where our son or daughter may have experienced some challenges. If he or she did not experience healthy bonding with one parent or the other, we can pray that the Lord will provide a healthy mother or father figure to fill in the gap. If our son or daughter has had difficulty in relating to members of the same gender or has had difficulty learning to relate to the opposite gender, we can speak into his or her life and provide some parental guidance to help him or her step over the hurdle. In some cases we may need to seek professional help for our son or daughter to help him or her grow onto a healthy emotional foundation. Whatever the emotional and spiritual status of you and your children, the Lord’s grace is sufficient to heal every wound and empower us to live a Godly life in Christ Jesus.