



INTRODUCTION

Most parents want to pass along their faith and offer their children the fruits of their experiences. They want to offer their children wholesome, value-centered information on many topics, including human sexuality. After all, the responsibility for teaching children about sex lies with parents. For some, though, facing up to this responsibility becomes a challenge. Strong parents realize they must debunk societal myths that permeate our super-sexed American culture but they don't know where to turn for resources they can trust. Some parents shy away from the subject because it makes them self-conscious; still others find themselves beleaguered by the barrage of sexually explicit images thrown at them from the media or others, so they give up. When our children hear false messages about sex from television, movies, magazines and music, they desperately need their parents to launch a values-based counter offensive rooted in truth.

Sadly, some parents today feel their words have no impact so they allow their voices to fall silent. In this situation, silence is not golden. There are groups that operate with a distinctive voice and they are not silent

when it comes to sex education. Planned Parenthood has adopted a mission and vision for the sole purpose of "getting to our kids." Hollywood and other "elite" chip away at our families every day with their psychosexual babble. There is money to be made from the destruction of our children's values and parents must remain vigilant to protect the future of our society.

Parents can't sit idle while pretending their children know it all when what they know about themselves and others is really very limited by lack of experience and knowledge. Parents everywhere need to shoulder the responsibility that society would prefer they ignore. Parents are the primary teachers for their children and few lessons will impact children's lives more than when they learn what God has planned for them and their lives including control and knowledge of their bodies.

Parents *cannot* really claim primary responsibility for their children's formation when they allow others to teach their children about human sexuality and other important matters. This book is meant to provide you with resources, knowledge and the courage and conviction to teach your children about human sexuality. I am not a moral theologian, physician, or family counselor. My credentials include being a wife, a proud parent of seven children, a very proud grandparent of seven (and counting), and an experienced teacher of natural family planning for the Couple to Couple League. I do not pretend to be the expert; for that I draw on "experts" to support my arguments. However, I also believe when it comes to your children, you are the expert. You are the most qualified person to pass along to your teen your family's philosophies and knowledge about human sexuality, for these lessons are personal and best discussed within the family. You have the opportunity to pass on to your children both your experience and what those lessons taught you in hindsight. Even things you learned the hard way – by figuring things out as you went along – contain practical and theoretical knowledge. It's good to arm that knowledge with true conviction.

A few years ago, I was invited to address a group of mothers and daughters attending an "All in God's Plan" program. My topic was natural family planning. Not long into the program the girls, some as young as age ten, began fidgeting. It was the classic sign of disinterest in a subject matter of no immediate relevance to their state in life. Many hadn't yet experienced ovulation or menstruation and thus had no practical knowledge of how they would soon change physiologically, psychologically and practically.

They didn't know what the heck I was talking about!

I had two pre-teen daughters who I had tried to interest in the science of the female reproductive system and they too responded with lackluster enthusiasm. It was at that point when several ideas struck me.

First, these girls weren't interested in this information about sexuality and human-person biology at this time simply because it was over their head. This detailed information wasn't immediately needed because it didn't jibe with or coincide with what they were actually experiencing. They couldn't relate or even pretend to be interested. Sometimes a concept is too complicated to understand so it's easier to just accept as it is or dismiss it.

Secondly, I was astounded to see that many of the mothers in the group appeared to be hearing much of this information for the very first time. I realized few had ever attended natural family planning classes, such as ones offered by the Couple to Couple League, in which details of the physiology of the human person are demystified.

Finally, I discovered that we all have a real need to first understand the biological person in order to better respect our bodies and thereby make appropriate decisions.

So my question became, at what age should we present information on human sexuality to children? I had to recall my pre-menstrual youth for an answer. I remember seeing a film in my Catholic grade school about how babies formed in the womb. Not much of it made sense to me at the time and I remember my friends and I talking about it afterwards, all of us befuddled with the exception of one girl who shocked us when she announced that sperm comes from your dad and your mom has the egg and they have sex and that is how the babies are made. "No way, not my mom and dad!" was my inner response.

I remember thinking I could get pregnant from a sperm if I used the toilet too soon after my father or my brothers. As far as sex, I had no idea what that meant; it had never entered my consciousness because of my age and innocence. As ridiculous as my misunderstanding sounds today, at the time, it nearly became a phobia. I honestly felt, at age eleven, I was probably pregnant and boy-oh-boy did I worry! I would push on my belly hoping to expel the pregnancy even though that action conjured up feelings of guilt. (Even at that young age, I understood that pregnancy equals baby and pushing out pregnancy equaled pushing out baby.) This crazed thinking of mine went on for some time until I finally realized that my

stomach wasn't getting bigger so I must not be pregnant. Perhaps, I finally began to have a clearer understanding of pregnancy because my sisters and I talked about this film a lot!

My point is this: rather than bringing a certain "joy" which follows truth and knowledge, too much information delivered at the wrong time can result in misunderstanding, confusion – even fear. Parents, I caution you not to disturb the dormancy of innocence. I worry whether similar confusion results from the Drug Awareness Resistance Education (DARE) programs taught to many of the nation's fifth graders. Sexuality and drug education is inappropriate when it is ill timed and may do more harm than good. As a result, I stopped teaching young girls about things that they might easily misunderstand or misconstrue and I caution all parents to consider their child's maturity level before examining certain topics.

Daughters Forever, Sons Forever attempts to bring together both short long term purposes. In the short run, I hope to provide you with information which can best be described as a human sexuality (health) curriculum and information with an emphasis on developing character and virtue. Long term I hope it helps you connect with your teen so together you navigate the road ahead. Furthermore, I hope you imagine yourselves as you were destined to be His daughter or His son, forever. In his children's book, *Love You Forever*, Robert Munsch writes: "I'll love you forever / I'll like you for always / as long as I'm living / my baby you'll be."

So it is for all parents. We all want the best for our children; the information in this book is meant to help you and your children learn and grow together.

In the following chapters you'll find information culled from a variety of sources, including talks presented during my *Daughters Forever, Sons Forever* program. Please enjoy, learn and grow from the information gathered herein. In the back of the book there is a list of resources I recommend to supplement the information compiled here.

You live your life as witness to your children. The information your children hunger for is frequently more personal than technical in nature, despite what secular institutions might want you to believe. The material presented in this book is a resource for you — a starting point. But what children need most is parental guidance that flows from the heart to the soul. Trust yourself to be the teacher God calls you to be. And may God bless you and your daughter or your son as together you discuss God's plan for them in and through their bodies. 🍀