

Teaching Helps

Teaching our children about pregnancy and childbirth is a foundational piece to having an open relationship towards talking about intimate issues.

As my children have grown and we have been blessed with more children, I have been on the look-out for good books that would help me to purposefully engage teaching my children about pregnancy, how babies are created, childbirth and what to expect after the baby is born. This is an opportunity to engage the legacy you are leaving with regard to intimate issues and to create a foundation of talking through these kinds of issues easily and more openly. Creating a foundation of openness, where no question is invalid or “embarrassing” begins as young as toddler-hood when they begin asking “where babies come from.”

We have an incredible opportunity as parents to engage our children and teach them about the miracle of life and how amazing our creator is. We have an opportunity, while they are young, to help mold their worldview with regard to the sanctity of life. Isn't this exciting?

Kids have so many great questions, especially once they feel you are really interested in what they are interested in. Having a baby on the way, a new addition to the family poses so many opportunities for the family to really engage in purposeful discussion and teaching. Books are just one great resource as you proactively choose to engage your children and teach them about life and let them naturally experience it with you.

Training in righteousness with regard to sibling rivalry.

Many parents worry their children are going to have problems with adjusting once a new baby comes into the family. I have experienced many times over, that when you embrace having a baby as “WE” are all getting a new family member and let's learn about this together, letting the children be as involved in the process as possible, there is much less opportunity for issues of jealousy. It takes training selfishness out of children though. Jealousy is a sin of selfishness and covetousness. Jealousy is a heart-issue. If your child is struggling, I would encourage you to change your perspective from fear of when the baby does come... to seeing this an opportunity for training in righteousness. At least you can see the issue and deal with it. Many heart issues are often secret and hard to detect. Be thankful you can see the sin in your child's life and work to help them overcome it by leading them to Jesus. Remember, every human naturally

struggles with this -- some more than others for sure. With regard to training your child's heart in the area of sibling jealousy or rivalry with a new baby... speaking truth, teaching God's love, giving love and consistent prayer for your child's heart attitude is the best cure for that ailment. Simply put don't sugar coat the sin or call it something else, and definitely don't follow the culture's standards by just blowing it off -- "every child goes through this... they will grow out of it once the baby is born." If you do this, I guarantee that selfish sinful heart will not be outgrown, it will grow and become harder to weed. Instead choose to fight for righteousness and use this opportunity to teach your child about sin and selfishness.

When you pursue engaging this sin in your child's life don't be afraid to use the correct biblical terminology. Teach them what sin is. Teach them to be able to recognize sin for sin in their life and others. Our sin is why we need a savior. Our children need a savior and so do we. So let's not train them to think selfishness and bad attitudes are "naughty" let's train them to have a biblical standard to see their sin for what it really is -- Sin.

This season is an excellent opportunity for teaching our children about our Creator and His grand design for procreation.

We have a natural opportunity when we are pregnant to engage our children and teach them about what is going on inside of us, and they have the awesome opportunity to be witnesses of this amazing miracle. If we teach our children with a natural approach and really engage them, their questions, and their fears, we have the opportunity for deepening our relationship with them in a way that otherwise might not exist. Every experience in life is an opportunity for growth, teaching, learning, and preparing for what might come our way next in life. All parents naturally want what is "best" for our children, but helping them be prepared for it, is another story that requires intentionality in the form of open communication and teaching.

If you grew up in a home where sex, childbirth and pregnancy were not talked about openly with acceptance of these intimate experiences as natural, teaching about them to your children could pose to be uncomfortable. These intimate God created experiences, they are His perfect design, we just experience an uncomfortable feeling discussing them is because of natural sin. Adam and Eve didn't feel the desire to hide their naked bodies until after they sinned against God. Forevermore, the human race will struggle with the "uncomfortable ness" of talking about these beautiful, intimate and spiritual moments, unless we allow God to redeem them.

As believers who have been made new in Christ, we need to leave a legacy with our children that is strong. Strong families, strong marriages, strong morals, and strong faith! We need strong children in the world today who know what sex is, what a gift it is to us from God, what it was intended for, how God created our bodies so intricately and amazingly. We need our next generations to have a deep conviction for the sanctity of life. It can only strengthen their faith and strengthen our relationships with our kids to teach them and discuss these things while they are young.

So please let me urge you not to wait to open the door of communication with your children. Don't wait until they are 14 and already "know" because of what they see on TV or hear from friends at school or dare I say church. Don't wait and then just say, "Having sex is evil." Sexual intimacy was God's design and it is for our good. "Don't have sex because I said so." Let's start a new legacy together of strong families teaching their kids how having babies is beautiful and natural. God created our bodies to do this, with His help. Let's teach our children the redeeming power of Christ in these experiences as we live them. Invite our children to live the experience of pregnancy and birth walking through it beside us. To truly mentor and raise them up in the way they should go, relying on the Lord in every experience in life, including birth. These are the legacies, the life testimonies your children will remember and pass down to their children. Childbirth within a family should be a monumental experience that everyone grows from in some way.

So as you pursue an environment of open communication in your family, in regards to intimate topics you should expect that as your children get more comfortable and trusting of you, that this topic is okay to ask questions about they will begin openly expressing thoughts and questions. This is very healthy; it is a sign of a deep trusting vulnerable relationship that is striving for openness and authenticity. Understanding that all children have the curious wonders and questions is vital in understanding the importance of pursuing open dialogue; and yes your children will challenge your ability to "comfortably" communicate about it. This is part of our growing process and allowing ourselves to be refined, challenged and grow. Embrace your privilege and responsibility to teach your children how to view Birth from a healthy perspective.

"Where do babies come from?" "How are babies born?" "Do they come out of your belly button or does the doctor cut your tummy open?" "Are they all goopy when they come out?" "How big is our baby?"

The first time my oldest starting asking these questions I was immediately nervous. How much do I tell her, how much is too much? I was also thinking ahead though... I want to have an open and comfortable relationship with all my kids on the topics of sex and such. It seemed so clear to me that if I wanted that outcome it all starts now. How I approach these kinds of topics. I know I want to be the one to talk to my kids about these beautiful and sacred moments in a

woman's life (pregnancy & childbirth). So the search for books to help me in this effort began. As you know all children are different and on different levels of maturity and understanding, especially when it comes to topics such as birth. For that reason I have chosen to label the categories light hearted, moderate, and intermediate and advanced in regards to maturity level of the child and what the parents feel is best suitable for their child.

Note: Light hearted books, may include easy reading, baby style board books, as well as fun books that don't really go into any details of pregnancy, birth, or post partum. Moderate books, would be books, I would still allow my children to read on their own, they are generally "safe" books, but maybe have more pages and details than a baby book. Intermediate books might include books that teach about how baby's are created, grow, and are born but with modest illustrations and careful content, with an adult's supervision is still probably fine for families who have been teaching on this topic to their little children and they are familiar with it. Advanced books would be those books, that depending on the age of the child/youth should probably be read with the parent, so that the parent can answer questions and make sure that the child is understanding and has a pure and healthy perspective. I highly suggest that moms keep some of these books in their rooms rather than with the other "school books" out of respect of friend's children that come over, in case they haven't been taught about birth. You don't want "curious" children that are not under your teaching flippantly perusing these books without their parent with them. These books are very tasteful designed to be used for educational purposes to assist and aid the parent in teaching and discussing sex, pregnancy, and birth from a natural and biblical perspective (depending on the book).

Resources for Parents in Teaching Children About Pregnancy and Childbirth:

Light hearted/ Easy Reads:

"The Bernstein Bears' NEW BABY"
"The New Baby" by Mercer Mayer
"Where did the baby Go?" a Little Golden Book
"The New Baby" a Little Golden book
"Now We Have a Baby" by Lois Rock

These are light and fun to read kids of any age! However they don't tackle any of the questions that the kids ask. They just touch the surface. Which is completely appropriate and valuable for little ones.

Moderate Reads:

"When You Were Inside Mommy" by Joanna Cole

- This book is illustrated with a few pages of pictures of the baby growing in the mommy's uterus (belly), and says things like "you started out a tiny cell half from your mommy and half from your daddy." For some kids that might quench their thirst for knowledge on the topic, but not my kids. It only creates more questions.

"How Did God Make Me?" by Matt & Lisa Jacobson (Zonderkidz)

- Illustrated book of a boy asking about how his baby sister was growing in his mommy's tummy. She talks about his growth and how God created him so small and how he grew and how happy that made both her and daddy. Sweet book.

"Koala Lou" by Mem Fox

- This is a beautifully illustrated book about a little koala that grows up and the mommy has other babies and how jealously sets in. I love this book to read with the kids. It gets them talking about the things they already feel sometimes and how life is about to change again when the new baby comes. (Not necessarily a book about pregnancy and birth)

"A Ride on Mother's Back" by Emery & Durga Bernhard

- My mother-in-law gave this book to the kids and I to read together when I was pregnant with Drew. It is about breastfeeding and baby carrying around the world. The illustrations are very tasteful and show how having babies and mommies nursing is normal and happens all around the world.

"The Miracle of You" by Karen Wells

- A Sweet inspirational book for pregnant mothers and children who are expecting a baby. Illustrated beautifully and inspirational scriptures and insights to encourage.

"We're Having a home Birth" by Kelly Mochel

A great book for children 3-8 years old on how to discuss and prepare them for the home birth event. It talks on the role of the midwife, what a labor partner does and so forth.

"Baby on the Way" by Sears Children's Library

This book shows how a mother's pregnancy affects the whole family, dealing with issues such as jealousy, etc.

"Happy Birth Day" by Robie H. Harris

In *Happy Birth Day*, Robie H. Harris tells a loving story to children about the amazing day when they were born. With a text as tender as a newborn's cheek,

she tells them how loud they cried, that they could see light, hear sounds, and even sneeze

Intermediate Reads:

"The Amazing Beginning of You" by Matt & Lisa Jacobson (Zonderkidz)

- This is my all time favorite book about pregnancy to read with all my kids. It starts out with Psalm 139 and has illustrations as well as real photos of the baby in the uterus through the whole pregnancy (month by month). A lot of text on what the baby does, how big the baby is, when the baby gets its fingernails and eyelashes, etc... One of my children's favorites!

"Let Me Tell You About My Baby" by Banish

- This is an old library book you can find on Amazon for \$.40. Given to me, to borrow, by a dear mentor and friend from church a few weeks ago. It is an older book published in the 70s, written from a little 3-4 yr old boys perspective of his mommy getting ready to have the baby and all the emotions and thoughts that go through his head after the baby is born. Very good for getting your kids to talk to you and also to get them to realize that big change is about to happen.

"Welcome with Love" by Jenni Overend

- This book is my second new favorite book. I just checked it out from the Water birth Center yesterday along with a birthing video to watch with Kelsey. I will caution you though; it is very open about the "pain" of childbirth. It is a great book for people to read with their kids who are contemplating home birth or letting their kids be present during the birth. It is illustrated with a few more "fleshy" pages, but nothing I won't be showing Kelsey and Megan.

"Why Do plants Grow?"

"Why Do Birds Build Nests?" both by Susan Horner

(These are the first 2 books in the Miracle of Creation Series)

- These books are great for getting ready to teach your kids about sex, you can read them with 3-8 yr olds

Advanced Children:

"God's Design For My Body?" Susan Horner (3rd book in series)

- This book describes the physical changes that occur in the body as well as the biblical covenant of marriage and sexual intercourse.

"The Ultimate Guy's Body Book" by Dr. Walt Larimore

- This book is great for helping parents talk about "tough" issues with their boys (ages 8-13)

Childbirth Videos (Appropriate)

Going to Midwifery appointments, holding the fake life size babies, listening to the baby's heart beat, listening to the answers the midwife has for your questions, all these experiences empower children to have a confidence in you and God.

My children love going to the pre-birth appointments, listening to the baby's heart beat, going to the ultra sound, seeing the baby, playing with the little life size baby models when we meet with the midwife. All of these experiences help to prepare them to meet their new sibling. One of my children's favorite experiences is watching the midwives draw the baby on my tummy. It helps them to visualize that the baby is really inside mommy, and how big it is. It is a highlight for me as well as we do this together.

Interject the Picture of the Kids with my with the drawing on my belly