



Your Thriving Values

Teach Your Children About Marriage

Part Two



Practical Application for Children in Every Age and Stage

— *THRIVING VALUES*™ —

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®



God designed marriage for our benefit, and marriage between a husband and wife reflects God's heart; a heart for relationship, unity, love, children, family, commitment and trust. These are all good things that come from healthy marriages, setting a foundation for a thriving society.

All of us want to impart biblical values to our children, values that will help them thrive and flourish in the world. In Part One of our resource, we offered practical ideas for modeling a healthy marriage and explained why marriage matters for kids, adults and society.

While there are numerous resources available to help parents talk to their children about the changes in their bodies as they go through puberty, and about sex and abstinence-until-marriage, there are few resources for teaching children about marriage. Marriage is the big picture, and sex is one part of that picture.

So this resource includes practical suggestions for imparting your values and equipping your kids to understand what marriage is and why it is so important: **from toddlers and preschoolers** (p.3) to **younger elementary** (p.6) and from **older elementary** (p.9) to **junior high and beyond** (p.11). We hope these suggestions will inspire your own creativity, as you and your family learn and grow through this process.

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Teach Your Toddlers and Preschoolers

Young children are watching and learning all the time, so much of what they learn about marriage comes from watching the two most important people in their lives: mom and dad. Even so, this is an important time to teach them a solid foundation about marriage.

Talk Together

Here are some concepts even toddlers and preschoolers can begin to understand:

- *God made everything. He not only made all the plants, birds and animals, but He also made man. But the man (Adam) was alone, and that was not good. So God made the perfect partner—a woman (Eve). God said this was “very good!”*
- *God is so wise! He wants all children to be safe and secure. That’s why He created marriage between the man and woman—a mommy and daddy—so children are loved and cared for.*
- *Dads and moms look and act differently; yet, both give children what they need. They help kids grow in different ways.*
- *Just like dads and moms, boys and girls are different. Both are special, both are good, and both are made to reflect God’s image.*

Your family may know someone without a mom and/or dad. You can reassure your children:

- *I love you and I love mommy (or daddy). With God’s help, I will stay with you both.*
- *Sometimes bad things happen, or things can go wrong in families. It’s sad that your friend lost a parent. But God is good and kind and has a special love for children without a mom or a dad.*



Read Bible Stories

Most families have at least one Bible story book for kids. If not, your church or local library may have one to borrow. From Genesis through Revelation, the Bible shows marriage as very good. Some stories to highlight and talk about: Creation and the first marriage (Adam and Eve); Noah and the male-female pairs of animals; Abraham finding a wife for Isaac; Ruth and Boaz; Jesus and the wedding at Cana.

Taking the creation story as an example, here are some things you might say:

God made Adam and placed him in the garden, but Adam was all alone—there were no other people around. So God made Eve and brought her to Adam to be his wife. This was the very first wedding. Now Adam didn't have to be alone or lonely. And Eve and Adam could start a family.



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Bless Your Children

Parents, we highly recommend praying a blessing—out loud—over your sons and daughters. They need to hear that they have value and worth, that they are made in God's image. Bless their growing relationship with God and their growing sense of identity; that they will be strong, confident and secure. Here are just a few examples to help you get started.



 *Pray a blessing over boys*

- *Little one—you are made in God’s image and likeness, as a boy. We bless you to grow into a healthy sense of masculinity, knowing God and reflecting His strength, love, power and goodness.*
- *My son—I pray, in Jesus’ name, that you would grow to be a thoughtful, adventurous, wise, loving man who experiences God’s grace, hears His voice, and learns to follow Christ in all things.*

 *Pray a blessing over girls*

- *My precious daughter—I pray you would be wrapped in our love and know the depth of God’s love and care for you. May you grow to understand Christ’s care for you as a daughter of the King, made in His image.*
- *My sweet girl—we bless you to know you are beloved of God. We pray you would embrace your wonderful femininity, knowing and reflecting God’s nurture, compassion and protection. We pray you would rest secure in God’s love and peace.*



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Teach Younger Elementary Children

Talk Together

As your children grow and mature, continue to talk with them about the concepts discussed earlier. Here are a few additional concepts to introduce and discuss:

- *God is the perfect Father—we can respond in thankfulness for good things He gives us.*
- *We are made in His image and likeness, created to reflect Him.*
- *We can help others who don't have a mom and a dad.*

Object Lesson

Look at a mirror with your child. Ask, “Is that you in the mirror? Or is that a reflection of you?” Explain that in the same way a mirror reflects an image, God designed us to reflect His image. You can choose to be like a mirror, showing others what God is like: good, loving, honest, generous, patient and forgiving. Jesus, of course, reflected God’s image perfectly, demonstrating what God is like. Ask your child, “What are some things Jesus did that show us what God is like?” (Some possible answers: fed the hungry, prayed, healed the sick, and welcomed children.)



Read Together

Younger kids typically love to have someone read to them—and as they are learning to read, they’ll also want to read to you. Look for opportunities to point out the good of marriage and family. For example, the *Little House on the Prairie* series, by Laura Ingalls Wilder, offers inspiring lessons about marriage and family. The books depict wonderful values, showing a family that works hard together; perseveres and overcomes obstacles; is grateful and loving; protects and cares for the weak and the sick; and graciously handles differences between siblings.

Family Outreach

Many children don’t have both a mother and a father, and there are sure to be single-parent families in your church, child’s school or neighborhood—or among your extended family. Talk about this with your children, and pray together, asking God how He would want your family to respond. You might ask a single parent if your family could come alongside and help in a practical way. Here are just a few ideas:

- *Find out their favorite foods (and any possible food allergies). Have your kids help in preparing and delivering a meal.*
- *Have your kids make a card, and place inside a gift card to a favorite restaurant or store.*
- *Invite them over for a meal at your home, making sure your kids are a big part of preparing the meal and cleaning house.*
- *Offer to come over a few hours on a Saturday and help around the house and yard.*
- *Invite the children over for dinner and games or a video, in order to give mom or dad a break.*



Support Foster and Adoptive Families

Your family might decide to come alongside families who are providing homes for kids in foster care or adopting orphans. Here's a resource to help your family get started,
Wrapping Around Adoptive Families
<http://icareaboutorphans.org/wraparoundadoptivefamilies/>.

Pray a blessing over boys

- *We pray you would grow strong as a son of God, our King. Be filled with His Spirit and demonstrate His character: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. We bless you in the strong name of Jesus as you grow into manhood.*

Pray a blessing over girls

Be blessed, in the name of Jesus, to know the Father loves you. You are His precious daughter, made in His image. Receive His love and demonstrate the fruit of His Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. God bless you as you grow and become a woman.



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Teach Older Elementary Children

Listening Together

Adventures in Odyssey® is a Focus on the Family® radio program, loved by both children and adults. In the episode, “The Vow” <http://bit.ly/1jhSlH0>, the two Barkley kids, Donna and Jimmy, hear about a friend whose parents are getting a divorce. They see some of the same signs of a breakup in their own parent’s marriage, and start to worry. Although this episode deals with a serious subject, young Jimmy’s humor helps lighten the mood.

Consider listening to this episode as a family, and discuss issues related to marriage and family, such as the importance of marriage vows, how much kids need a mom and a dad, and how your children can be open and honest about worries or fears.



Research Together

Each year, when Feb. 14 rolls around, we celebrate Valentine’s Day with cards, candy and flowers. But who was St. Valentine? And why is he celebrated?

Do a little research with your children to see what you can find out about St. Valentine. While there have been several St. Valentines throughout history, check out the story of Valentine the priest who lived during the reign of a particularly evil and bloody Roman emperor, known as Claudius the Cruel. Valentine defied the emperor’s decree and performed Christian marriages. As a result, he was beaten, stoned and beheaded.



Discuss and Ask Questions

St. Valentine held the Christian view of marriage: A husband and wife should serve, love and respect each other as they raise a family together (see Ephesians 5). At that time, the pagan view of marriage was selfish: “Take what you want and kids are disposable.”

- *Why do you think marriage is so important?*
- *What good things come from marriage?*
- *How did the Christian worldview conquer the pagan’s view and, in doing so, change the world?*
- *What do you see in our culture of these two views?*
- *How can we win back the world with God’s design for marriage and family?*
- *Why do you think St. Valentine was willing to disobey the emperor and perform Christian marriages, knowing he could die for his actions?*

Talk about Marriage and Sexuality

Sex is one component of marriage, and if you haven’t already started, this would be a good age to begin discussing sexuality with your kids as they move toward puberty and adolescence. Here are some resources to help:

- *God’s Design for Sex Series*, by Stan and Brenna Jones
<http://bit.ly/1bdP5sH>
- *Preparing for Adolescence*, by Dr. James Dobson
<http://bit.ly/IEZhzD>
- *Lintball Leo’s Not-so-Stupid Questions about Your Body*, by Dr. Walt Larimore with John Riddle (for boys)
<http://bit.ly/1bdQvDt>
- “Teaching Children Healthy Sexuality,” by Rob Jackson
<http://bit.ly/18AYdZP>



- “Talking About Sex and Puberty,” (adapted from *The Complete Guide to Baby & Child Care*; Focus on the Family)
<http://bit.ly/1bdRDad>



Bless Your Children

Pray blessings over your children, including a blessing of their masculinity or femininity. Pray for your children’s future, whether as a single person devoted in service to God, or as a married person committed to God, a spouse and children. For more ideas on what kids need to hear and how you can support and encourage them, we highly recommend:

- *Raising Confident Daughters and Secure Sons*, by Glenn Stanton
<http://tinyurl.com/lc8osh6>
- *The Blessing: Giving the Gift of Unconditional Love and Acceptance*, by John Trent, Ph. D. and Dr. Gary Smalley
<http://tinyurl.com/ldgsle3>



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Teach Children in Junior High and Beyond

Your kids are getting closer to the age where they will launch into the world. But they still need and want your attention and input. Take time to help them think through some of the important aspects of the marriage relationship, such as male-female differences, our longing for connection and intimacy, and God's design for marriage. Discuss other important aspects of marriage such as commitment, forgiveness, trust, communication, handling disagreements, working together and raising children.



Read About Male and Female Differences

Men and women are different, despite the misguided belief of some in the media and in academia, who view gender differences as arbitrarily assigned by society. Do some research with your kids and discuss male/female differences; for example, Carol Ann Rinzler has a whole dictionary of differences in her book, *Why Eve Doesn't Have an Adam's Apple*.

The Bible teaches that God divided humanity into two sexes. While men and women are similar in many ways, we also want to celebrate and enjoy the differences. Here are just a few examples, and researchers are finding more all the time:

- In *Why Gender Matters*, author Leonard Sax notes that boys and girls often see the world differently, because their eyes are made differently. Typically, boys are drawn to motion and colors such as blue, black, silver and gray. Girls are more drawn to faces and to brighter colors like red, orange and green.
- Sax also says boys tend to be more ready to take risks than girls; partly because they tend to overestimate their abilities, but also because they want to impress other boys.
- Girls and women tend to be more socially adept and relational than boys. Glenn Stanton, in *Secure Daughters and Confident Sons*, writes about their strong desire for intimacy and connection.



There are many more examples, but also exceptions. Some boys are more relational, while some girls are more risk-takers. But these male-female differences are, in general, true. Parents should resist defining masculinity and femininity too narrowly, we want all girls to embrace healthy femininity and have confidence that they will grow into godly women. And we want all boys to know they can and will become men, believing they have what it takes to enter the world of men.

Watch and Discuss Movies Together

It's interesting to note how many movies have orphans or children with one parent. *Plugged In*[®], Focus on the Family's entertainment guide, has an interesting interview with Don Hahn, a movie producer from Disney films, where he discusses this phenomenon.

- Read the article <http://bit.ly/KaRiL0> and talk to your kids about how children need a mom and a dad. When one or both are gone, we recognize the loss in a child's life. What are some things that are lost? How do characters in movies overcome the loss? What do kids get from moms that they don't get from dad? What does dad offer that mom doesn't?

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- For older teens, you might watch a film like *42*, a film that depicts Jackie Robinson's battle—along with the Dodgers and owner Branch Rickey—against racism and segregation. (Check out the review at *Plugged In*[®] before you decide to watch—there is some language, sexual content and violence in this PG-13 film: <http://bit.ly/KaRiL0>.)
- Discuss the importance of faith and family in Robinson's life, giving him the strength to stay





strong and persevere. Robinson tells his wife he carries her in his heart, and there's a poignant scene in the movie where he talks to his newborn son:

My daddy left us flat in Cairo, Ga. I was only six months older than you are now. I don't remember him. Nothing good. Nothing bad. Nothing. You will remember me. I'm gonna be with you until the day I die.

- How is life different when children grow up without a dad? How do good fathers help children thrive?
- Eric Metaxes' book, *7 Men—And the Secret of Their Greatness*, gives more details about the role of faith and family in Jackie Robinson's story (<http://bit.ly/17L53EQ>).



Bless Your Teens

Knowing about male-female differences will help you as you affirm your children. *Secure Daughters, Confident Sons* <http://tinyurl.com/lc8osh6>, by Glenn Stanton, is a tremendous resource that will give you even more ideas for blessing your children as they grow into men and women.



We want your values to *thrive* in today's culture,
so we invite you to check out our host of helpful resources
at: FocusOnTheFamily.com/SocialIssues.aspx.

CONTACT:

800-A-FAMILY (800-232-6459)
8605 Explorer Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920
Email: help@FocusOnTheFamily.com

The models in this curriculum are used for illustrative purposes only.

THRIVING VALUES™

