



8TH GRADE TRIP

Many parents talk to their kids about sex. The conversation is often filled with “don’t” and “be careful,” but parents frequently miss the opportunity to talk about why these ideas are so important. Isn’t it true that your dreams for your kids are amazing and worth discussing? Isn’t it true that these hopes are probably better than your own personal experiences when it comes to sexuality and intimacy? Have you considered talking with your kids about those dreams to paint a picture of what could be? The goal for this Milestone Experience is to cast a vision for your student of God’s plan of sex for him or her. Your student needs a goal in order to strive for it. With that in mind, the secondary goal is to create healthy habits and guardrails to help your student achieve the goal. You need to paint a picture of the life you dream for your middle schooler and that God dreams for him or her when it comes to sex and intimacy. Hopefully, your dream for your child will become your 8th grader’s dream as well.

This Milestone Experience provides an opportunity to **ENGAGE** with your student by taking a fun road trip. A small part of the trip will be devoted to helping your 8th grader understand God has amazing plans for his or her life, including your teenager’s sexuality. You will also have an opportunity to **AFFIRM** your son or daughter by giving a special ring or other gift you choose to signify your dream for your student of sexual purity. Let’s get started on planning your child’s 8th grade trip!

STEP 1: PREPARE

We want to help you maximize the potential of this Milestone Experience with your student so here are some ways to plan your trip and some tips for getting the conversation started.

Invite your teenager to go with you on a weekend full of fun.

We encourage you to let your student decide what that fun will be, within the constraints of the budget you provide him or her. Our hope is that your student can take the lead in determining what this trip will look like in exchange for one focused conversation on your dreams for your student’s sexual purity.

Often this trip is planned for one parent and one teenager. Many families make this a father/son or mother/daughter event. However, this may not be possible (or best) for your family.

Before the weekend begins, be sure to let your teenager know your plan. Try not to surprise him or her. Teenagers don’t like surprises, especially when it comes to talking about sexual purity. Let your student know specifically at what point on this trip you will be discussing sexual purity. That way your son or daughter can be prepared for it.

SHARE YOUR STORY...YOUR REAL STORY.

We know this sounds crazy to some of you. We are not asking you to confess all your past sins to your student or share any more details than it takes to make a point. We are asking you to be honest. The last thing a middle schooler needs is a role model who is unrealistic. Middle schoolers are very aware that they aren’t perfect. Perfect role models do nothing but remind them of their lack of perfection. On top of that, perfect role models are pure fiction. Students need to see redeemed people working on their own lives. That includes you. We’re not saying that you need to share every embarrassing detail. We are saying you need to share your struggles and failures—the things you are trying to help your student avoid. If you can say, “I made choices because I didn’t trust God had a better plan, and they were mistakes that I don’t want you to repeat,” your 8th grader will listen.

Middle schoolers love to hear personal stories. They are learning to apply what they know to how they act and the choices they make. Anytime you have something important to say, you can magnify it by telling a personal story of how you wished you would have known what you are about to say to them.

SHARE YOUR DREAMS FOR THEM IN THE AREA OF SEXUAL PURITY EVEN IF IT FEELS AWKWARD AT THE TIME.

Sex and purity conversations can be the hardest conversations to have with your teen, but they are also talks that can take your relationship to a new level.

Even though your 8th grader may wince every time the s-e-x word comes up, he or she really does want to feel safe with you on this topic and know your heart for him or her.

PREPARE TO GIVE YOUR TEENAGER A SYMBOL TO REMEMBER YOUR CONVERSATION.

After you ENGAGE in conversation with your child, you will have the opportunity to AFFIRM your 8th grader with a special symbol. Many parents give a ring to their teenager to represent the commitment to purity. That ring can then be exchanged with the wedding ring at his or her future wedding ceremony.

You might think of another symbol that would better fit your teenager to help your student remember this very important commitment. Purchase this item ahead of time so you can bring this on the trip and present the symbol after the end of your purity conversation.

STEP 2: ENGAGE

Now that you are **PREPARED** for your trip, here is some content that you can choose to include during the weekend. You do not need to feel like you have to cover all of these topics. We've provided them as a resource to help your conversation. A simple game plan includes sharing parts of your story, sharing your hopes and dreams for your student's purity, and discussing any of the topics below.

"ONE FLESH" IS A REALLY BIG DEAL AND A GREAT PLACE TO START THE CONVERSATION.

"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother, and will join with his wife, and they will be one flesh.
–Genesis 2:22-24

When God first brought a man and woman together, Adam's response was that she was, in reality, a part of him. It pretty much took his breath away to realize that they were meant to be made one.

A great place to start in explaining the sacredness of sex is that God intends for us to be joined and united as one with another human being. Sex is a gift to us from God. It is a powerful union to care for another person sexually, emotionally, and spiritually, and it is not meant to be carelessly repeated with different people throughout our lives. To become one flesh means not to be torn apart.

Grace and restoration play an important part here, too, because our kids sometimes stumble and make poor sexual choices. Marriages often struggle and end. However, helping our teens strive for the goal of experiencing "one flesh" with just one person will guard their hearts in a world of broken ones.

Share with your son or daughter why you believe that God's plan for sex is best. Here are some Scriptures you might want to share with your 8th grader:

Genesis 1:26, 31: God sees sex as a good thing.

Genesis 2:18-25: God created sex.

1 Thessalonians 4:3: God has a standard for sex.

Matthew 19:4-6: God created man and woman to become one flesh.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20: Sex outside of marriage is not a good thing.

MANY PEOPLE IN OUR CULTURE RIDICULE THE IDEA OF WAITING UNTIL MARRIAGE TO HAVE SEX. DISCUSS WITH YOUR TEENAGER THE COMMON VIEWPOINTS AGAINST GOD’S PLAN FOR SEX.

Here are some statements you might use in this part of the discussion:

I have never met someone who waited until marriage to have sex and regretted it. I have never met someone who followed God’s plan and then after the honeymoon said, “I wish I would have had more sex before marriage!”

The people who disagree with God’s plan for sex see it more as a physical act. God created it to connect body and soul. Sex for a married couple is like spiritual super glue. It is not meant to be exchanged casually.

When you engage in sexual activity prior to marriage, you are creating a “marital” type bond with a boyfriend or girlfriend.

God’s plan for sex is the only safe sex. There is no way to 100% avoid pregnancy outside of marriage or to elude sexually transmitted diseases with pills or condoms. The only way to avoid these things completely is to save sex for its proper place—a committed marriage.

Sex is used by many to sell movies, music, and products. Sex is undervalued by many and is used to satisfy a physical urge at the cost of emotional pain. My dream for you is that you value yourself, value your relationship with God, value your relationship with me, value your future spouse, value your own body, value your own soul, and value sex as something to be treasured, not used casually.

It is your job to honor the purity and integrity of your boyfriend or girlfriend, not take advantage of it. One day you might attend the wedding of someone you dated and broke up with from your past. I want you to be able to shake the hand of his or her future spouse, with no regrets, knowing that you protected that person’s purity.

Your students will encounter many people who will think they’re crazy for holding out for God’s best plan. Start a discussion by acknowledging that. Ask them how they have handled that already. How will they handle that in the future? Give examples of your own conversations in this area.

The man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed. –Genesis 2:25

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light... –1 Peter 2:9

GIVE PRACTICAL GUIDANCE TO HELP YOUR STUDENT SET HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP BOUNDARIES.

Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to live in a way that pleases God, as we have taught you. You live this way already, and we encourage you to do so even more. For you remember what we taught you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. God’s will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor—not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways.

—1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-5

Encourage your teen to enjoy co-ed friendship groups as often as possible, because he or she can learn so much more about sharing everyday life with the opposite sex in those relationships than he or she will in dating relationships.

Establish the PDA boundaries in your home (location and privacy) to help your student avoid tempting situations.

If you haven't already had a technology discussion, now is a great time. Parents can help by making their homes a safe technology zone. Filtered wireless routers are a welcome deterrent to doing the wrong things online. At the same time, your student only has four years to learn to deal with an unfiltered world. The best defense is an ongoing conversation about how things are going. Hurtful and dangerous content is not the only threat online. Technology allows students to be very public very easily, which can be dangerous. Talk about texting rules, social media rules, pictures, etc. Ask about how your student handles friends who make bad choices on social media. You will learn a lot in this conversation if you simply listen. Your student may have some or many friends with different or no dreams for their futures. Sexting is a HUGE problem among teens, so social media accountability is a non-negotiable. You should always be allowed to know passwords and check your student's Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and text messages.

Lastly, troubleshoot with your teenager about what to do if he or she finds himself or herself in a situation where he or she might compromise on sexual choices.

PRAY TOGETHER

Take some time to thank God for the opportunity to share with each other honestly. *Here are some things you can pray over your teenager:*

- Pray that God would guard his or her mind and fill it with truth in the area of sex.
- Pray that God would guard his or her body and give your son or daughter a desire to honor his or her body.
- Pray that God would guard his or her heart and protect him or her from unnecessary emotional pain in the area of sex.
- Pray that God would continue to grow your relationship with him or her and give each of you the courage to continue talking about purity.
- Thank God for the strength and opportunity to have this important moment together.

STEP 3: AFFIRM

Now that you have had an opportunity to **ENGAGE** with your 8th grader in a discussion about sexual purity, you can capitalize on the significance of this moment by presenting your son or daughter with the symbol you have purchased ahead of time. You can use this script as a guide for your presentation.

SAMPLE SCRIPT

"I am so glad you are my son/daughter and I have enjoyed the time we have spent together this weekend. Through this Milestone Experience, we've talked about God's plan for you in the area of sexual purity.

[Present your symbol]

Hopefully, this gift will be a daily reminder to you that God has your best in store for this area. On your wedding night or during your wedding ceremony give this ring to your spouse as a celebration of promises kept. I am so proud of you and I hope this experience has shown you that I am here to walk this journey with you."

Remember that no one has a louder adult voice than you in the life of your teenager. Your words weigh the most to your son or daughter. You are your son or daughter's greatest spiritual influence. Congratulations on using that influence to set your 8th grader up for success and health in the area of sex on this memorable 8th grade trip!