

Learning About Sex

Sex & the New You

A Guide for the Christian Family

boys ages 12–14

For Discussion or Individual Use
Book 4 of the Learning about Sex Series for Boys

The titles in the series:

Book 1: Why Boys and Girls Are Different

Book 2: Where Do Babies Come From?

Book 3: How You Are Changing

Book 4: Sex and the New You

Book 5: Love, Sex, and God

Book 6: How to Talk Confidently with Your Child about Sex

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life consultants who have assisted in the development, updating,
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Editors' Foreword

This book is one in a series of six designed to help parents communicate biblical values to their children in the area of sexuality. *Sex and the New You* is the fourth book in the series. It is written especially for boys ages 12 to 14 and, of course, for the parents, teachers, and other concerned adults who may want to discuss the book with the children in their care.


Like its predecessor, the updated Learning about Sex series provides information about the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of human sexuality. Moreover, it does so from a distinctively Christian point of view, in the context of our relationship to the God who created us and redeemed us in Jesus Christ. The series presents sex as another good gift from God, and it helps us understand sex in the larger context of our entire life of faith. To counter cultural influences, be strong and consistent in communicating the miracle of God's design. The way God made us is just the way He knew it should be for our health and happiness.

Each book in the series is graded—in vocabulary and in the amount of information it provides. It answers the questions children at each age level typically ask. Because children vary widely in their growth rates and interest levels, parents and other concerned adults will want to preview each book in the series, directing each child to the next graded book when he is ready for it.

Ideally, this book will be used as part of a biblically based, broadly focused—yet personal—training program to prepare young boys for manhood. For young men, this training can flow from a mentoring relationship similar to that of Paul and Timothy. A young man can learn much from a father, grandfather, or other adult man who trusts in Jesus for his salvation. In the context of such a relationship, questions of a personal nature can be asked and answered, insightful discussions held, and godly behaviors modeled. Your expression of positive and God-pleasing values will likely have a greater impact on the healthy development of your son than any book, other than the Bible. God's plan unfolds as each generation in succession passes on the truths God imparts through His Word and the wisdom that comes as challenges are met and overcome by the power of God's grace. We pray that this will be the beginning of ongoing open, honest, and intentional communication with your child regarding God's magnificent design.



NOTE: The books in this series also can be used as mini units or as part of another course of study in a Christian school or church setting. Whenever the books are used in a class setting, it is important to let the parents know beforehand, since they have the primary responsibility for the sex education of their children. If used in a classroom setting, the books in this series are designed for separate single-gender groups, the setting most conducive to open conversations about questions and concerns. As the Christian home and the Christian school and church work together, Christian values in sex education can be more effectively strengthened.



How does a woman
get pregnant?
See page 53.

Is it wrong to look at
nude pictures? What is
pornography, and why
do people look at it?
See pages 62 and 63.

What does it
mean to be gay?
See page 15.

How are babies
born?
See page 54.

Is my penis the
right size? See
page 41.

You've Heard and You've Wondered

1



You've heard questions like those on page 6 before—maybe you've asked them yourself. And maybe you haven't been quite sure about the answers.

This book has been written to help you answer some of the questions you have about your body, about getting along with others, about sexuality, and about differences between males and females.

More important, this book will remind you who gave you life and made you who you are. You are a child of God. Because God loves you, He sent His own Son to live and die for you. This kind of love means He won't ever ignore you; He'll guide you and protect you and forgive you. Because Christ died for you and paid the penalty for your sins, God is able to accept you just as you are. And because Christ

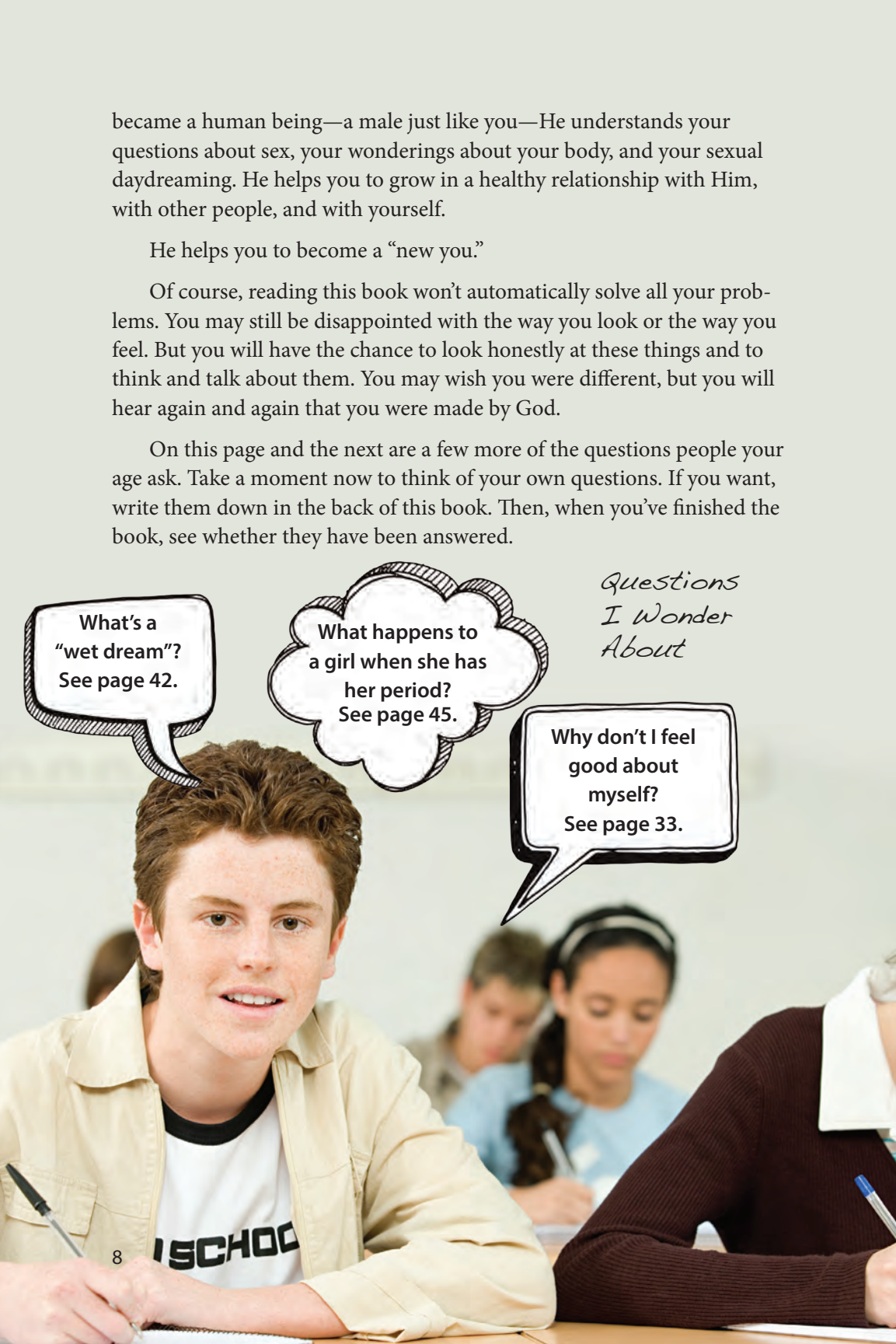


became a human being—a male just like you—He understands your questions about sex, your wonderings about your body, and your sexual daydreaming. He helps you to grow in a healthy relationship with Him, with other people, and with yourself.

He helps you to become a “new you.”

Of course, reading this book won’t automatically solve all your problems. You may still be disappointed with the way you look or the way you feel. But you will have the chance to look honestly at these things and to think and talk about them. You may wish you were different, but you will hear again and again that you were made by God.

On this page and the next are a few more of the questions people your age ask. Take a moment now to think of your own questions. If you want, write them down in the back of this book. Then, when you’ve finished the book, see whether they have been answered.



What’s a
“wet dream”?
See page 42.

What happens to
a girl when she has
her period?
See page 45.

*Questions
I Wonder
About*

Why don’t I feel
good about
myself?
See page 33.

You're a Special Young Man!

2



“Am I normal?” many young people ask. It’s so easy to feel alone and different. It’s easy to think you are the only person feeling the way you do—about your body, your family, yourself. Maybe you feel this way because of the changes in your body. Or you feel different because your body is not growing as fast as other boys around you. Or maybe your body grew much faster than the other boys, and that doesn’t feel so good either. The last thing you want right now is to be different! Perhaps you are experiencing a growing awareness of sexual thoughts and feelings. You wonder if such thoughts are normal.

Who can I talk to?

It’s good to have a friend you can talk with when you’re not feeling good about yourself or are confused or sad. But it’s especially great to know Jesus as our Friend! He can actually “sympathize with our weaknesses” because He “has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). That’s in the Bible, so you know it is true. Jesus really knows how we feel, because He was born and grew and went through the teen years too. That’s why we can talk to Him and know He’ll understand.

How do I know I am special to Jesus?

Even more, He’s your Savior! He lived and died and rose again to make you a child of the heavenly Father. He’s living proof that “the Father Himself loves you” (John 16:27). That’s good to remember when you don’t feel loved or when you feel guilty, anxious, or scared.

The God who loves you and forgives you is the same God who made you. No one else—not even an identical twin—is exactly like you. You are special; you are not a carbon copy of someone else. You look different, you feel different, you think differently than anyone else. You grow at a different rate—maybe in spurts, maybe at a fairly

In what ways has God made me different from anyone else in the world?

regular pace. But whatever your growth pattern, it's just right for you because God made you and set your growing up into motion. When you recognize that God made you and loves you, it is okay to put your confidence in that fact. You are a child of God!

God gave you your body and soul, your eyes, ears, and all your members. He gave you your mind and senses, and He still takes care of them. How does HE still take care of them? He gives family resources to buy food, clothes, a home where you can sleep. He gives you teachers that help you learn new things. He gives you the ability to think and choose healthy ways to take care of your body and mind. It is pretty neat to think that God's hand is in all these things.

Through these people and resources, many people serve you so that you are happy and healthy. And because you are happy and healthy, you, too, are able to serve other people by being a son, a brother, and a friend. Taking care of your body and your mind helps you serve!

Let's take a look at questions you can ask yourself that will help you to continue to be a healthy servant of God.

How do I honor God in the care of my body?

1. Do I get enough sleep every night? Would getting more sleep help me feel refreshed instead of tired?
2. Do I eat nourishing food? Is the food I eat helping my body grow?
Do I sometimes eat too little or too much?
3. Do I wash my body and face every day to keep myself clean and free from germs?
4. Do I care for my body by exercising in healthy ways—not too much and not too little?
5. Do I recognize that smoking is not something that will keep my body healthy?
6. Do I believe that taking drugs and drinking alcohol can cause me to make poor decisions?

To which of the following do you relate?

- ☐ "What is happening to my body?"
- ☐ "Why isn't my body changing yet?"
- ☐ "I feel like I am too tall."
- ☐ "I feel like I am too short."
- ☐ "I'm so awkward! I keep tripping over my feet!"
- ☐ "My voice cracks."
- ☐ "My face has zits."
- ☐ "No one else has the problems I have; no one ever did."
- ☐ "No one understands me."
- ☐ "I don't understand me."

Food, exercise, staying clean, sleeping, not smoking or taking drugs, not drinking alcohol, continuing to learn all that you can in school: all these things contribute to keeping the body God gave you healthy. He doesn't care if you have pimples or are the smartest guy in the world. He cares for you through all these things and equips you to help your dad, to have fun with your friends, to help a neighbor with her lawn, or to tutor your younger brother in reading. Things like this are how we serve one another. Being healthy helps you do this!

By taking care of your body, you also show glory to God, who created you. Paul wrote a letter to other Christians and encouraged them: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Even if you have pimples right now, even if you feel clumsy and awkward, whatever you look like on the outside, remember that you belong to God and that He loves you. Peek in the mirror again. Go ahead—it won't hurt. Look beyond the familiar surface and find the hand of God there. See if you don't feel a little different now—ready to go and serve others because that is WHY God made you.

You are chosen by God. You've been set apart from other people in this world. You are God's child, a member of His family, working together to bring God glory.

What difference does being a Christian make?

You are different than others. Our culture puts out confusing messages about your identity, your body, and your sexuality. But in His Word, God tells us His will—what is best for us. He knows, because He made us! In His Word, He tells us that He would do anything for us because He loves us.

The world may tell you to live for the moment because you only live once. The world may tell you that you have the right to choose to do whatever you want with your body. But the world is full of the consequences of those selfish, sinful attitudes: addiction, broken relationships, unplanned pregnancies, and emotional pain.



The Holy Spirit is helping you to make good choices to keep your growing mind and your growing faith healthy. He will strengthen you. The Holy Spirit is also helping you to make good choices to keep your growing body healthy.

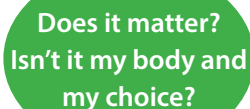
You may feel like you're the only one who isn't watching "those" shows or listening to "that kind" of music. Or you may worry that your friends will make fun of you. But chances are that you aren't the only one of your friends who feels uncomfortable when someone in your group shows something inappropriate. Try to stay busy with activities that you know are not questionable. Suggest to your friends doing a different activity instead of watching an improper show or movie.

If you are a Christian, God's Spirit lives in your body. You are a valuable member of God's family. It matters what you put into your body. Remember, "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Excessive use of alcohol and drug abuse do permanent damage to brain cells. Any use of alcohol and drugs interferes with your thinking and can cause you to make really bad choices that you might regret for a long time afterward.

Smoking can lead to serious problems, such as lung or oral cancer and heart disease. Smokers have bad breath, their clothes smell, and their teeth can become yellow. Other tobacco products such as chewing tobacco are not safer. They, too, can cause gum disease and cancer. Smokeless tobacco irritates your gum tissue and can cause tooth decay, and it is even more addictive than cigarettes.

Other people are affected by the choices you make about your body. If you smoke, the people who live in your home and who are around you will suffer the physical effects of breathing in the smoke that comes from the end of your cigarettes. This second-hand smoke can cause ear infections, lung or breathing problems, asthma attacks, or even cancer. A mother who smokes, drinks alcohol, or does drugs is much more likely than those who don't to bear children who have serious physical and mental problems.



Does it matter?
Isn't it my body and
my choice?

Those who abuse alcohol and drugs often cause accidents that harm others. As a preoccupation with alcohol and drugs takes control of them,

they waste their lives, are unproductive, and destroy their relationships. Support of an illegal drug culture leads to many other terrible crimes.

As the Holy Spirit works through God's Word, He gives us the power to honor God in the choices we make about what we put into our bodies and how we care for them. He helps us to live our life for Jesus—the one who lived, died, and now lives again for us! As Christians, we can look to the future instead of living for the moment. You can think through what will happen if you make a certain choice. And you can have peace knowing that no matter how much of a struggle it is to live as a Christian in this world, you don't live only once. This world is not the best that it gets. Our human minds can't even imagine the joys that await us in heaven, and through the Holy Spirit at work in us, that's where our focus lies.

Critical Thinking:

- **The stage you are in right now is called *adolescence*. Does it feel like an awkward time? Why is God having you go through these changes?**
- **Look back at your day or week. What are some ways you have made poor choices that show you were only thinking about yourself? What are some ways you thought about others and served them (like a parent, brother, sister, friend, or teacher)? How can you change the way you do things so you focus more on showing God's love by serving others?**
- **If you feel bad about the way you have behaved and the choices you made, what do you think happens next for a Christian? (Hint: Tell God you are sorry and know that you are forgiven!)**



The Miracle of Birth

9



“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it’” (Genesis 1:27–28).

These words from Genesis show how God made man and woman for each other. He wanted them to be happy together, and He wanted them to use their bodies to produce the children that would someday fill the earth. For this reason, He made men and women different, and He made those differences something that would cause men and women to be attracted to each other. This sexual attraction is a gift of God. Men and women are made in a way and with feelings that cause them to want to be together.

Is it wrong to notice girls?

As you grow older, you will feel this attraction more and more. You will want to be with girls—in groups or with one person. As you grow older, you will want to spend more time with girls. You may well begin to spend time with one special girl. As you get to know each other, you may fall in love and begin to look forward to marriage. Doing planned activities with a person of the other sex is called dating. Through dating, a man and a woman get to know each other. If a first date leads to a second or more dates, the two people usually enjoy being together and doing things together.

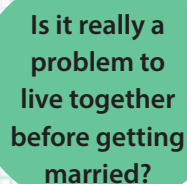
Some Christians encourage courting rather than dating. Courting refers to actions or activities undertaken in the effort to secure a spouse. In the process of courting, couples develop romantic relationships only with those each would consider a potential spouse. Ideally, courting relationships grow out of friendships.

Why might courtship be better than dating?

The man and woman who have identified character qualities they desire in a godly spouse allow their relationship to grow over time as they get to know each other and each other's families. Over time, they explore and share with each other their values and beliefs about God, finances, and free-time activities. They make plans for the new life they will build together in marriage.

God's original plan was for a husband and wife to live together in a faithful commitment under His blessing. God first instituted this union for Adam and Eve before they sinned. In marriage, a man and woman build a new life together, through which they love and serve both God and each other. They work together to share God's love in their family and their community. God passes the knowledge of His grace and goodness from one generation to the next within this new family.

When a man and woman live together outside the commitment of marriage, on a temporary or trial basis, they are showing disregard for God's will. God did not plan it that way! In marriage, a husband and wife find peace and contentment and feel emotionally healthy because they trust that their spouse loves them and wants to be committed only to him or her for his or her entire life. God instituted (established) marriage because He knew what a blessing it is to bring happiness and fulfillment to our lives.



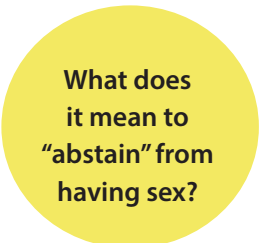
Is it really a problem to live together before getting married?

If an unmarried man and woman try to use sex to become closer to each other or to feel good about themselves, they will be disappointed and hurt. When you are married, sex shows that you are connected and united in body and spirit to only one person. But when you are not married and have sex, you may have doubts about your relationship with that person and you may feel insecure about what the person (and others) feels about you. Instead of making you feel better or making your relationship stronger, it only makes you feel worse and weakens your relationship. There is no commitment, and that way of thinking about sex can harm your future marriage. God designed sex only for husbands and wives for a very good reason.

Another thing to consider as a Christian is what *God* desires for us in our earthly relationships. Certainly He wants us to serve and respect all people, but He gives us a clearer picture of the unique relationship in

marriage. As was written earlier, God says our earthly marriages are like Christ's relationship to the Church (all believers). What does God's love look like? Faithful. Complete. Freely given. Fruitful. These four traits are beautiful words to describe God's love and the love found in Christian marriages. We might not expect people who don't trust in God to pattern their relationships on God's love, but as Christians, we don't have such an excuse. Living together apart from marriage is a very clear sign that our love is not complete. It also leaves open the possibility that one of the individuals living together may not be faithful. Without the promise made in marriage, a couple is still holding back part of themselves from each other. What part of Himself did Jesus keep from us on the cross? No part; He gave the total gift of Himself, His own life! This is the picture God gives to help us understand how our marriages ought to work.

You will see a great deal of uncertainty and unfaithfulness in the relationships around you as you grow. Even at this young age, you can set your mind and heart on the ways of God to prepare you for the incredible bond of marriage. If God blesses you with a wife, you will be ready to give all of yourself to her. Having God's plan in your heart and mind can also help you identify a young woman who shares these same beliefs about marriage.



What does
it mean to
“abstain” from
having sex?

There is no need to “practice” before marriage so that you will be an “expert” at having sex. God made a husband and a wife for each other so they will find delight in each other. You can trust your loving, all-knowing heavenly Father's plan for your life. What honor and respect you're showing to your future wife by waiting to only share your body with her! **Abstinence** is the term used to describe not having sex. That would be a much better gift to her than if you think about other women and compare your wife to other women while you are making love to her.

You will have joy learning more about your wife's body and what makes her happy after you are married and have promised to be faithful to only each other for your whole lives. Being intimate with another person means that you're getting to know that person extremely closely and deeply. In a committed, lifelong marriage, you can let someone know you—all of you—and feel happy and safe with being that vulnerable. What a blessing this personal, comfortable, safe, warm, dear relationship

with your spouse will be! This familiarity is not something you share with other women before or during your marriage.

Because of the special and unique relationship husband and wife enjoy in marriage, God wants only married people to engage in the close, intimate, and loving act known as **sexual intercourse**, also called “sex.” “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother [the family in which he grew up] and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Husbands and wives have a special bond together. This means they have a special relationship where they share ideas, interests, and feelings. A bond also means a special promise, or covenant, between two people that shouldn’t be broken. And in marriage, as in science, a bond is an attracting force that holds things together, combining, uniting, and strengthening the two.

Research shows that this bonding process occurs whenever two people are sexually intimate. The problem comes when they are not totally committed to each other and break up. This damages a person’s ability to bond to another person in the future. If this sexual bonding occurs many times, the ability to trust and feel safe is made even smaller each time. Rather than getting better at intimacy, people who have sex outside of a committed marriage get worse at finding intimacy. They are making it much harder to get and enjoy what they ultimately want and what God created them to share. It actually works in the opposite way that people think!

Sexual intercourse is a very special part of marriage. It’s a way for a husband and wife to show their love for each other. When a husband and wife are feeling close and loving, they find a private place to be together—usually their bedroom. They kiss and caress each other. Gradually, they become ready for intercourse. That’s the way God planned it. Sex is a way to show affection.

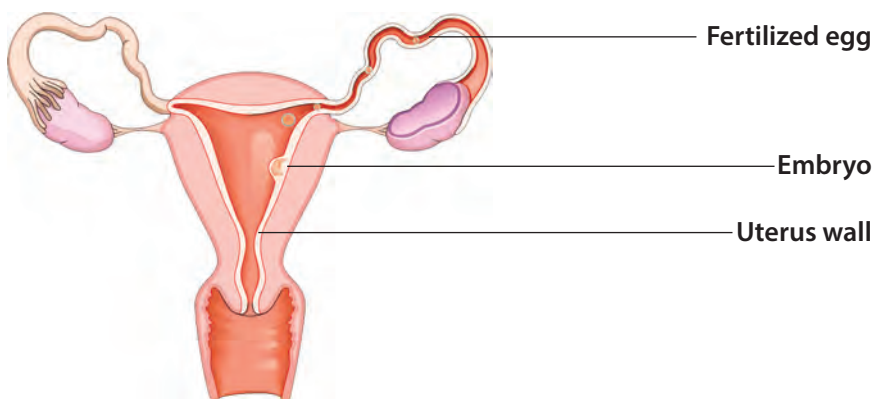
In sexual intercourse, the husband’s erect penis is put into the wife’s moist vagina. The penis ejaculates semen into the wife’s vagina. Both the husband and wife usually feel pleasure during sexual intercourse and feel relaxed and satisfied afterward. Soon after ejaculation, the penis again becomes limp.

Marriage is God’s plan for establishing families. A husband and wife become a family, joined together by God. Sexual intercourse is a physical, emotional, and spiritual reflection of that union and commitment and love.

A husband and wife are best friends who share companionship and similar interests and values. God blessed marriage for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the Lord and offer Him their praise (Genesis 1:28). A home is a wonderful, safe place to share happy times, laughter, and learning experiences and to provide support for one another during difficult times. A husband and a wife are a team, working together to create a loving, healthy home and encouraging and strengthening each other. How much more two can accomplish (Ecclesiastes 4:9)! What a support when one is feeling weak! God shows His love for us through the love of our spouse.

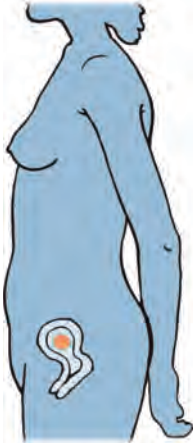
How does a woman get pregnant? Will she get pregnant each time she has sex?

During sex, if the woman has recently produced an egg cell, she can become pregnant. The man's sperm meet the egg cell. When one sperm enters the egg cell, that cell becomes fertilized—that is, no other sperm cell can now enter it, and that fertilized cell is the beginning of a new human being. This means the married couple has **conceived** a child. The fertilized egg gradually moves into the uterus, attaches to the wall of the uterus, and begins to grow. At this moment, it is smaller than a pinpoint. Until the end of the second month, it is called an **embryo**. After that, until the baby is born, the growing child is called a **fetus**, which in Latin means “young one.”



Since extra blood is needed to nourish the growing egg as it develops into a baby, ovulation and menstruation do not occur while a woman is pregnant. Missing a period is one way a woman senses she might be pregnant, and it should prompt her to visit her doctor for tests that will make sure. If the woman is pregnant, the doctor will instruct her on the

How are babies born?



One Month



Four Months



Seven Months

best way to care for her body in order to give her baby the best chance to develop normally.

About nine months after the egg and the sperm joined, the baby is ready to be born. For several months before the birth, the mother and father are able to feel their baby move in the mother's womb. Shortly before birth, the fetus usually turns in such a way that its head is pointed downward in the uterus. Then the muscles of the uterus, which have stretched to make room for the growing baby, begin to tighten and push, forcing the baby from the uterus into the vagina.

When this process, called **labor**, begins, the mother knows the birth will come soon and usually goes to the hospital so a doctor can help with the delivery. The baby usually arrives in the world headfirst from the vagina and soon gives out its first cry, a sign that it is breathing on its own. The **umbilical cord**, which joined the mother and baby in the womb and through which the baby received all its nourishment for nine months, is cut, leaving the navel, or belly button, on the baby's stomach.

Following the baby's birth, the **placenta** leaves the mother's body through the vagina. The placenta is the mass of blood vessels that grew in the uterus to help provide nourishment for the baby. God's miracle of conception and birth is now complete.



Nine Months

After the baby is born, the mother's uterus, vagina, and vulva slowly return to their normal size. If the mother breast-feeds her new baby, her breasts grow larger and begin to produce milk. If the mother chooses to bottle-feed her child, her breasts stop producing milk and return to their normal size. The process God designed to get you from a fertilized egg to the person you are today is an amazing miracle.

Sometimes, the embryo or fetus does not develop normally because of disease, injury, or some other problem. When this occurs and the baby is unable to survive or develop properly in the mother's uterus, the baby often dies and is pushed out of the body in a process called a **miscarriage**. This can be deeply painful for a mother and father who were expecting to welcome their baby into the world. It is estimated that about 10 to 20 percent of known pregnancies (the mother is aware that she is pregnant) end in miscarriage and that 30 to 50 percent of fertilized eggs are miscarried before the mother even knows she is pregnant. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we can provide comfort to the grieving parents by praying for them and sharing God's Word.

God designed it that after nine months in the uterus, babies are ready to live in the world. Babies born before they have been in the uterus nine months are called **premature babies**. They can grow to be strong and healthy, but they need extra care after they are born. They are usually kept for a while in incubators, which keep them warm and away from germs. Although it's not the way God designed it to be the most healthy, babies have been known to live if they were born at twenty-two or twenty-three weeks. Babies who have not been born yet (at first called an embryo and then at three months called a fetus) are living people; it's just best if they develop inside their mother for forty weeks.

"The Baby Looks Just Like You!"

Who in your family do you look like? Maybe you have your father's eyes or your mother's hair texture. Maybe you don't look very much like either of them. Maybe you are adopted, and you don't know which birth parent you look like. Regardless, both your father and your mother passed on to you a number of the features you have.

The sperm cell from the father contains 23 tiny elements called chromosomes. Each chromosome contains hun-

Why do members of a family sometimes resemble one another?

dreds of parts called **genes**, which determine what the child will look like. There are genes for the color of the skin, for the shape of the head, for body size—for all of the traits that describe how a person looks.

The egg cell of the mother also contains 23 chromosomes, each with hundreds of genes. When the father's sperm cell unites with, or fertilizes, the mother's ovum, or egg cell, the fertilized cell has 46 chromosomes that determine what the new baby will look like—half of them from the mother and half from the father. Each of the father's 23 chromosomes is matched or fitted with the same chromosome of the mother. There are about 70 trillion possible combinations of chromosomes that a child could inherit!

The genes, which are the actual carriers of the features, may be either **dominant** or **recessive**. Dominant genes are stronger than recessive ones. Since genes control the way a child will look and the way the child's body will function (**heredity**), the more dominant genes will have more influence over which characteristic is reflected from parents, grandparents, and other ancestors, even though the other recessive genes act on the same trait. This helps explain why parents can have children with different colored hair than their own.

Remember, too, that both the mother and father received their chromosomes from their parents, who got them from their parents. So each newborn baby receives a good mix of characteristics from many different ancestors. That's why you may have brown eyes like your grandfather, rather than blue eyes like your mother or gray eyes like your dad.

What decided whether you're a boy or a girl? The sperm cell of the father. There are two kinds of sperm cells. One kind has what is called an X chromosome; the other has a Y chromosome. If a sperm with an X chromosome fertilizes the ovum, the baby will be a girl. If a sperm with a Y chromosome fertilizes the egg cell, the baby will be a boy.

There are two kinds of twins, fraternal twins and identical twins. Fraternal twins begin life when two different sperm cells join two different egg cells. Fraternal twins are not much more alike than any other two children in the same family. They might be two boys, two girls, or a boy and a girl.

Identical twins begin life when one sperm cell joins one egg cell. The one new cell splits into two cells that begin to develop separately as two different people. Identical twins look exactly alike, but they are not. Each one is special. Each has his or her own interests, ideas, personalities, and experiences.

The more we study the wonders of conception and birth, the more we will agree with the psalmist: “I am . . . wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14)!

Critical Thinking:

- **Why did God create male and female? Why did He give marriage as a gift to men and women?**
- **Do you hope to get married someday? What are you most looking forward to for your marriage?**
- **How does God involve men and women in His wonderful work of creation?**



It really is an exciting time for you right now! You will continue to grow physically and in your relationships with other people of both sexes, with your family, and with God. The days, months, and years just ahead of you are bright and exciting and so full of opportunities to use what God has given you. God is with you every step of the way, strengthening, encouraging, and guiding you through His Word. The Holy Spirit gives you the power to live a new life each day full of confidence, knowing you are forgiven in Christ, free to serve others, and not burdened by fear or guilt.

The frustrations and disappointments will not end, but the joys and blessings will far outnumber them. You've reached the end of this book but not the end of learning about yourself and others. Take these few reminders with you as you go on from here:

1. Accept yourself as a worthwhile gift from God. You are special and unique.
2. You are worth the effort it takes someone to get to know you in a meaningful relationship. Don't settle for a relationship based on physical attraction only.
3. Thank God for the gift of your family. Pray for good communication. Know that they want what's best for you and are there to support you. Accept your family just the way they are. Forgive them and expect them to forgive you. Show them your love with words and with a hug now and then.
4. Thank God for your friendships. Pray for good Christian friends who will influence you positively. Reach out and help others. Be thoughtful toward them, and treat them the way you'd like to be treated.

5. Thank God for the special gift of marriage. Pray that God would bless you with a partner to share your life with and that you would respect each other from the moment your relationship begins.
6. Thank God for your body. Work to keep it active and healthy. Take care of it, since it's the only one you'll have. Eat wisely, take time for rest and recreation, develop your special interests, and use the gifts God has given you.
7. Thank God for your special skills and talents. Work at those areas in which you can achieve. Strengthen the weak spots. Decide to be the best you can be at whatever you try, accepting your strengths and your limits.
8. Share your thoughts and ideas with others. Talk to them. Ask for advice, and don't be afraid to risk being fair, just, and Christian. Open up to those you admire and trust. Be honest with your parents and friends.

Critical Thinking:

- **Why is it important to stay connected to God through worship, prayer, and His Word during this time in your life?**
- **What type of son, boyfriend, husband, or father do you hope to be?**