

Here's a short list of things kids everywhere seem to wonder:

- Are my sexual responses normal?
- Why do I get nervous around people of the other gender?
- Why do I get turned on so easily?
- Do I get turned on like other people?
- Why do I feel guilty about my sexuality?
- Am I a sex fiend?
- Am I gay?
- Could I turn gay?

This list hasn't changed much in the last 50 years. Curiosity about homosexuality may have escalated a bit, but other than that, the list looks about the same.

Grown-up responses to these questions haven't changed much either. Christian adults who sit down for reasonable, biblically informed conversations about sexuality are few and far between. Half the church gets laryngitis when kids ask about these things. The other half talks louder.

Some adults are just plain uncomfortable talking about sexuality. So they answer a question with a question:

"Whadaya mean, 'Do you get turned on like other people?' You're not supposed to get turned on at all!"

"Why in the world would you even ask if you could turn into—one of those?"

One of the dirty little secrets about the church is that Christians don't always agree about sexuality. In fact, Christians can be downright disagreeable on the subject.

Take gender roles, for instance.

Some Christians believe being male means one thing and one thing only. And being female means the exact opposite. There are male jobs (thinking, heavy lifting, bringing home the bacon) and female jobs (cleaning, bearing and raising children, cooking the bacon) because—so the theory goes—that's the way God likes it. And anybody who crosses the behavioral divide has some explaining to do.

Other Christians believe the only differences between men and women are cultural and therefore nonbiblical, if not frankly *unbiblical*. They believe we invent what it means to act like women and men as we go along, from one culture to another. As far as these folks are concerned, people's gender is defined by their plumbing and wiring—but their behavior isn't (men can nurture without being feminine, and women can think without being masculine).

People in each of these two camps have been known to wonder if people in the other camp are even Christians. Jam all those opinions in one room and things get pretty noisy. Or very quiet. For a lot of Christians, it's easier to not have the conversation at all.

That's a mistake. Maybe this goes without saying, but if we don't decide what we think about sexual identity, someone else will tell us what to think. In fact, someone else is—loud and late into the night.

So we'd better.

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**like father, like son**

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**WRITE ABOUT IT**

- Q:** What are the most helpful messages about sexual identity you've received from your family?
- What are the least helpful messages about sexual identity you've received from your family?
- Q:** What questions about sex could you talk about with your parents, siblings, or other family members you respect?