

Fifteen minutes later, Pete stood in front of the congregants who had returned. Most had, but Twyla Gordon was not one of them.

“I didn’t talk to the children about sex today, and I apologize to all who were offended by how close I came to it. But I have a problem. I don’t understand why we *don’t* talk about sex in Sunday school.”

“That’s crazy!” One of the men in the back called out. “Sex isn’t something to talk about in church.”

“I would like to challenge that thinking. Please bear with me,” Pete looked briefly at Jenni before he continued. She suspected where he was going and

she gave him a small smile of encouragement. “When I was a kid, my parents didn’t go to church, but one of my aunties and my grandma used to drag me to church and Sunday school occasionally. It wasn’t every Sunday, but it was every few months, right up ’til I was old enough to refuse to go. When I was introduced to sex at sixteen, I became very active. I was proud of it then but now it shames me.

“The point is that I sometimes wonder whether I might have made some different choices if even once someone in Sunday school had addressed God’s plan for sex. I do know that I remember every story I ever heard in Sunday school, so I was listening. The story of Samson, while quite enchanting for an eight year old, isn’t something that makes a real difference in a child’s life, especially when all you talk about is Samson’s strength and how he served God. Why don’t we talk about how being a sex addict messed up his life? What about King David and Solomon. They both blew it in part because they didn’t obey God’s plan for sex. It seems to me that sex is too important a subject to leave untouched until our children have already been tempted with it.”

“You may have a point,” a woman said, “but we don’t really need to talk about sex to third graders, do we? We can wait until they’re a little older.”

“I’m going to have to challenge that thinking too,” Pete addressed her respectfully. “First off, probably at least two or three of our third graders have already had an encounter with sex. At least one has probably been molested. Do you want to take the chance that it won’t be your child? Just a couple weeks ago—”

Pete suddenly stopped and looked at Jenni. She nodded her approval for him to continue. “Just a couple weeks ago, Kara was ... well, I really don’t think it’s too strong a word to use – she was assaulted on the playground by a fifth grader who tried to kiss her. He threatened her when she told him she was telling on him. It was only the hand of God that allowed her mother to find out about it that very day. Kara wasn’t going to tell.”

Jenni looked around and saw that many of the faces in the room were thoughtful, but a few were totally closed off.

“I have a friend who was molested by her own father,” Pete had a catch in his voice. When Jenni looked back at him, he didn’t look at her. “Like me, she went to Sunday school as a child. In fact, her and her brother went more often than I did. Her life might have turned out very different if the church had told her how to know what was right and what was wrong, if it had given her a safe place to turn to when her father started molesting her. But she thought the shame was hers, not her father’s, and she never told anyone until years later, after her life was in shambles.”

Jenni forced herself to remain calm. She looked around the room. Everyone was focused on Pete, no one was looking at her. She wished she could have talked to Pete, known where he was going before he went there. But it was okay, because he was right.

“Why can’t we be a church which provides a defensive line for the children who come to us? We all know that parents will send their children to Sunday school even when they don’t go to church themselves. Those children are often the ones who need godly sex talks the most. Wouldn’t it be a good thing if we were able to be used by God to rescue some of the children who live such sad lives?”

“You have a point, Pete,” Doug Williams was one of the parents of a third grader. “How do you propose we do this?”

“Honestly, I’m not sure, Doug, but I think that Pastor Vic and the church leaders need to talk about it and figure out how we can do God’s work in this. I’m not going to teach anything the leadership of this church hasn’t approved, and I apologize again for the fiasco today. I certainly will clear anymore bright ideas before I implement them.”

“I think maybe Pete doesn’t go far enough.” Brad Higgins was a single parent with three children, all still in grade school. “I think the whole church needs to be taught about God’s plan for sex, not just the children.”

“Why do you say that?” Doug Williams asked.

“Well, to be honest,” the young man blushed but looked steadily around the room. “I’m like Pete. I was never taught what good sex looks like. I’m a thirty year old father and I still haven’t been taught about God’s plan for sex. Sure I’ve been told that abstinence outside of marriage is the only way to go, but how does that work? How do you back out of an active sex life once you accept that it’s wrong? What does good sex in a marriage look like? Is it just for procreation or is it for pleasure too? I’m pretty sure that our sex life was one of the things that went wrong in my marriage, why Peggy left me. I’d sure like to have a better idea of how to do things right before I start dating again.”

“But we can’t talk about sex in church,” Ruth Dunston, a new grandmother, said. “People are at so many different places, widowed, divorced, sexually abused, never been married. If you talk about sex in church, you’re going to offend some people and lose others.”

“The problem that I see with that argument,” Pete said thoughtfully, “is that it makes all subjects taboo. If we talk about death, we may hurt or offend someone who’s had a recent death in the family. Someone who’s never experienced the death of a loved one can’t fully understand. We can’t talk about abuse because there will be both abuse victims and abusers in the audience.

“But isn’t it important to talk about what God sees as important? Since the very first command recorded in the bible, Genesis 1:28, is ‘go have sex, and lots of it,’ it seems to me that God thinks sex is very important. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul said that we should marry to defend against temptations because of rampant immorality. All around us, our culture mocks virginity and monogamy, but the church is afraid to discuss sex because some people might be offended. When we set the standard of Christian education at what’s comfortable, it’s no wonder we’re so poor at evangelism.

“Some people are offended by talk of heaven and hell, sin and redemption. Do we back off from the possibility of offending, or do we talk about it anyway because God said to? We’ve got to talk about what God says is important, not about what won’t offend people. Good grief, the secular world isn’t afraid of offending anyone and it’s making great in-roads into the Church. Let’s start offending right back, but doing it God’s way, not the devil’s.”

Pete finally looked at Jenni again.

“I think I’ve said all I need to say at this time,” Pete smiled wryly. “Especially since I’m getting pretty hungry. Please though, honestly consider what I’ve suggested.”