



### EPISODE #13

# Dr. Dean Busby: A Little Info=Huge Difference in New Marriages

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[Breaking the Silence Podcast by Reach 10](#) with hosts **Creed Orme** and **Crishelle Simons**

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*If the sex education you got consisted of 2 things: 1. Don't do pornography, and 2. Don't be sexual before marriage, then this episode is for you. Creed and Crishelle talk with Dr. Dean Busby, a professor in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University, about getting past the DON'Ts of sexuality.*

*He teaches that sexuality is the thing that uniquely defines marriage, and young couples shouldn't have to figure it all out on their own. Education about what's normal, what bodies are like, and how men and women are different can help build healthy marriages.*

*This is part 1 – watch for more of this conversation coming soon!*

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Crishelle:

Welcome back listeners. We are so excited to be breaking the silence today with Dr. Dean Busby from the School of Family Life at BYU. Dean, help us get to know you and tell us a little bit about yourself.

Dean:

Okay. Well this is, I've been a professor for 30 years. This is my 30th year and taught at three different institutions. I started out after I got my PhD in family therapy and then started on my first position at Syracuse, New York and worked there in a family therapy program. And then after about a decade, I moved to Texas Tech and I was running a department there in administration for six years. And then

they hired me back at BYU. And so I've been at BYU now for about 15 years. I have been married for, this is my 37th year. We have three kids working on 10 grandkids. We have eight and two more on the way. I was always most interested in newly forming couples. What do they bring into the relationship that makes a marriage more likely to succeed? What happens in the early stages of that relationship, both dating, courtship and then into marriage that you know, contributes to whether or not they're going to have a relationship that lasts and is satisfying. The thing that kept coming up at BYU, interestingly enough, it kind of surprised me, was that the challenges the people in our culture were experiencing and mentioning a lot in the early years were sexual issues. And so I started thinking more directly about that and I looked at the resources that were available and I didn't like them. I didn't think they were specific enough. They were too vague for the kind of culture our students were going through. The media saturated, heavy amounts of sexuality in that media, and the books and things they had available to them were just so vague, and so not specific enough to help them through those already transitions. I thought, well, we better dig into this sexuality stuff. And so we started studying it specifically and as I started doing that, it became really, really clear to me that it is the thing that uniquely defines marriage. It is the thing, if you follow traditional pathways in the marriage, that what is the thing that marriage has that other relationships don't have is this intense physical sharing that's wrapped together with the emotional and the spiritual sort elements. And no other relationship can match that in. And if we don't get that right, it can be fundamentally problematic. And so it isn't that marriage is only about sexuality, but it is that it's most unique in that area of sexuality. And then of course from sexuality comes children. And that is you know, one of the most amazing things about sexuality and families. Then in particular, in terms of the culture here in surrounding BYU where I'm working now I do find, and we know this about religious parents that they're less likely to talk about most things about sexuality except for pornography. And so the only message kids are getting, many kids, is just a sort of negative message about don't do this bad thing about pornography. And so it felt like as we dug into the sexuality, you know, we don't have the goal, we just have the don'ts in our culture. Don't do this, don't do that, don't do. And then magically have a good marriage, a sexual relationship. And we're not going to tell you how, and we're not gonna tell you what, just figure it out.

Crishelle:

We're not even gonna tell you what that even means or what that could look like or . . .

Dean:

Exactly. Yeah. And when you dig down with religious parents, it's not unique to our religion at all. When you dig in and you see what is it you want of your child, "I don't want him to be sexual." I mean, if you really get them to be honest, I just want them to be non-sexual and then get married and then magically open the door. And because it scares them, they don't know what to do with it. They know they don't want them to be involved, they don't want them to mess up their lives, but they're afraid what they say might get in the way, give them ideas, et cetera. And so they say nothing or little and just the negatives. And so when we started working with students at BYU, these, we kept finding that the topic of sexuality was loaded with anxiety and shame. And that comes to tell you the truth from focusing on negative stuff. Like, you're going to get involved in this porn or you're going to do this stuff with masturbation. You're going to do this or that and that's bad and you're going to be, it's the closest thing to murder you can do, you know, all this sort of loaded language. And so of course we don't want our children to do bad things, but when you connect something as beautiful and amazing as sexuality with anxiety and shame, that's a hard thing to undo. Anxiety and shame are like glue to behaviors. They stick to them. And so even if you know, if you've done well in the sense of you've been abstinent and you, you've restrained yourself, but when you think about sexuality, you fear or, you have anxiousness or you feel

shame once you begin to be involved in sexuality, it doesn't go away. Even if you're now in the right place, in the right time. And so unraveling that can be a substantial challenge for a lot of people. Not to mention the difficulties that can occur just naturally with ignorance. I mean, our bodies are different, substantially different. That's what makes sex possible. And we typically, as ignorant people, when we try to get somebody to do something with us, it doesn't have to be about sex. We assume they're like us. We assume, they feel, they think and they will do the things that we do. And that can be very problematic with a couple. I'll give you the simplest example. Men have at the age of 20, they have 10 times as much testosterone in their body as a female does. And testosterone is the central hormone for sexual desire—not sexual enjoyment and other things—but it's the central hormone that's pushes somebody to want to be sexual. 10 times more! So if you assume as a male that your partner feels the same way you're in for a lot of disappointment in sense of expecting at the same level of intensity around the sexuality that you might have. Now these are averages. So some females have more interest in sexuality than some males. The bell curves overlap. But in general, there's quite a significant difference in that. So if you don't know that and you move into this, again, assuming your partner is like you are then you're going to start out with the wrong expectations. And then when and how often to be sexual becomes something that's painful and difficult because you're making these assumptions that you're okay and your partner doesn't want things the same way and she must be broken. And then you let your partner know that and then she feels bad about something she shouldn't feel bad about. And then you get in this power struggle and everything can go in the wrong direction really quickly and it doesn't have to be that way. If you just have some basic understanding, work with it together, understand you have different levels of interest, you need to approach that as a reality that there's nothing wrong with anybody. It's healthy. She has typically, for example, the female system is built to handle oxytocin better. Oxytocin is a bonding hormone and it's really powerful and it gets stimulated when you do cuddly things and you talk and you do. And this is the interesting thing about it. When you're in a relationship where you're abstaining from sex before marriage, you're doing a lot of that. And oxytocin also stimulates sexual interest. So both the male and the female in a premarital abstinent relationship assume they have the same level of sexual desire because oxytocin is off the charts as well. And he's just got the regular high level of testosterone. So they're making incorrect assumptions. They get married, again to be sexual, things adjust to normal. And suddenly what changed? They think they have something changed, nothing changed. They were just in this sort of artificial place.

Creed:

So when they get married, they oftentimes start cuddling less maybe and so...

Dean:

Right, so oxytocin can go down and.

Creed:

Testosterone is still there.

Dean:

Right, and sex is new in marriage. And so when something is new, it's always more interesting. And so both partners are more interested in engaging and figuring it out. And once that newness sort of wears off a little bit and normal levels of hormones kick in then they start having these challenges around how come you don't want sex as much as you used to anymore? What's wrong? And there's nothing wrong. So again, if you understand that regular process, you can work through it and have a healthy approach.

Nobody gets shamed, nobody gets punished. You just learn how to work with different interests levels and not pathologize one another and learn what to do to get the oxytocin moving a little bit more as well and keep that moving. And that's the courting part of relationships. And if you let that go and it's just about sex, it isn't going to be a very good relationship. So all of that's just a simple example of how a little bit of information about what's normal and what could work, what should happen, what typically happens, what bodies are like, how they're different. And here's some strategies to use as you begin to work through this can make a huge difference in just the first year of marriage, but nobody gets that information. And so then they're left sort of on their own to make incorrect assumptions. And so, as I said in our sort of pre-recording, you know, we're getting couples out 45 and 50 and they're having the same fight for 25 years. It's sad. It's just sad. And it doesn't have to be that way. And so it feels like an area that you can make a pretty big difference pretty quickly with a little bit of information, three or four hours. And we'll give you the knowledge. What it won't do in three or four hours is undo the anxiety and that's harder. That's a harder thing to get over. And that's something that has to start with in home. And then a couple can really if they work really hard early in marriage to get comfortable with talking about sexuality, being very open about their feelings, thoughts, interests, they have language to talk about their bodies. They can, they can do a lot in the early stage of marriage to sort of undo this anxiety and shame because they're starting to build a relationship that is not about the problems.

Speaker 3:

It's about, you know, just being open and sharing and they're both trying to figure it out. And so they have a lot of questions and so, but, but most couples struggle to be open and talk about sexuality very, very well.