



EPISODE #21

Should Young Adults Learn About Sexuality While They're Waiting for Marriage? With Harper Defreitas

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

Some people wonder if it's appropriate to get educated or talk about sexuality with single young adults who plan to save sexual relationships for marriage. Creed and Crishelle talk with Harper Defreitas about the benefits of learning about sexuality now. Harper is a young woman who learned a lot while working for a leading sex therapist for LDS couples, Laura Brotherson. She says education can lead to better decisions in dating, stronger self-mastery, and a healthy sexual mindset. It helps us develop as complete beings with emotional, spiritual, and physical wholeness. If we don't talk about it in positive way, we're going to be taught distorted views through media and culture. Harper shares some open, positive, and safe sources to learn from for young people who share values of sexual integrity as taught in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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Creed:

Welcome back, listeners. Today we have Harper Defreitas. We are so excited to have her here. She has some important things to discuss with us regarding why it's important for young single adults to get educated about sexuality even while they're waiting for marriage.

So why is it that young single adults should get to know more about sexuality while they're waiting for marriage? And we're looking forward to what she has to say. We have two episodes that will be with her. This is the first one. And then we'll have another one. And just as a reminder, we are all separated once again still because of Covid-19. So we're all together online. But go ahead Harper and introduce yourself to us.

Harper:

Yeah, so my name is Harper Defreitas and I'm from the north shore of Oahu. I grew up there, my family moved there when I was about two. I'll just give you guys some of my my background. My dad is from Brazil. He's from a town called São Vicente and it's by the beach. And my mom was from Southern California, so they met and we moved to Hawaii when I was two. And they're still out there. And I came up to BYU after serving a mission in Las Vegas and I am so, so excited to chat with you guys. I really got introduced to this topic fully in depth at BYU, which is kind of funny, but like a lot of people would think, "Really? Healthy sexuality?" But yes, it's true. And I can give some of my culture, my background too. So I have always really loved labor and delivery and just kind of growth in that way. And so from a young age, I wasn't raised LDS and I joined when I was 16, so I was kind of steeped in some really positive and also some really unreliable sources from a young age. And so I grew up being really curious about babies, where they came from, about pregnancy, and about everything. And later that translated into "I'm wanting to know about healthy sexuality and about relationships and how to prepare for a strong marriage." So that's a little bit about me.

Crishelle:

I love that. So are you still in school? Are you graduated? Where are you at?

Harper:

Yeah, so I graduated about a year ago and since then I have worked for Laura Brotherson. She's a marriage and family therapist and a sex therapist, and she's also LDS, so I'll be referring to a lot of her books and other literature like Jason Carroll's book Sexual Wholeness in Marriage. And so yeah, I'm working right now. I live up in Sugar House and I've been loving it. I'm loving the warmer weather I should say. So it's been interesting during Covid-19 to kind of learn how to do things. More by myself, but it's been good.

Crishelle:

Love that. Love that. And I love that you work for Laura Brotherson. I love her. She's influenced me so much from a young age and her work, her books have really influenced me. And so I'm so excited to hear from you and to learn from you.

Harper:

Yeah. So just to clarify, I don't work for her right now. We're still really good friends. I called her last night to chat about this just to get her thoughts on what I was going to share and so I have some quotes that I'll share from her from our chat last night. So I don't work for her right now, but I love her too. She's incredible.

Crishelle:

Cool. Party on. So tell us a little bit about what healthy sexuality means to you.

Harper:

Yeah, so I'll start with kind of explaining what healthy sexuality is, just briefly because a lot of people were like, well, what is healthy sexuality? How is it different from sexuality, from just knowing about sex? And so healthy sexuality is really—it's the intimate relationship that includes the emotional and physical dimensions, not just the mechanics of sex. It's not just the physical side. So it's more than that. So that's what healthy sexuality means. It's that complete view. And for me, it really, it means, yeah, it means unity. It means divine wholeness. And it's helped me to be a better person because of it and to make better decisions in dating. I'm not married. And so as I've dated, it's helped me and just to have peace and confidence. So really it's kind of this holistic view. And it doesn't fragment just the physical side of sexuality. It's really like this complete package of the emotional, the spiritual and physical.

Creed:

And why is it okay and important for those who aren't married to really learn about that, understand it, and learn more information about what healthy sexuality is?

Harper:

Yeah, so I feel like it's more than just, okay. It's crucial. It sets the framework, it sets the foundation for our relationships now for who we are as complete beings. The sexual-being being included in that. And it helps to have these really strong marriages later. It's the prevention for disconnection, and for turning to pornography, for isolation. It helps you to be prepared and to be better aware. And so I feel like we need to talk about it. And it's because it's so important to develop a healthy sexual mindset to set intimate boundaries before and even after marriage to develop sexual self-mastery and confidence. So many good things that we really do a disservice by not talking about it beforehand. And I feel like there are such big blessings that come from living, from fully knowing about this, and living the law of chastity, how it ties to that, and so how can we really live something that we, that we don't know very much about. And so it's important because it opens a conversation, it prepares you for what's to come later. And it also influences who you are now. Whether or not you ever get married.

Crishelle:

No, I really love what you're saying because as I reflect back on my single years and the years I was reading sex books before I got married and even before I was engaged, in fact, I picked up her first book, *And They Were Not Ashamed*, Laura Brotherson's first book, when I was like 18-ish and read it for the first time. And then again, later on, and I was always a little bit nervous. I like hid it from my roommates, you know, like I didn't want people to know that I was like reading about these things 'cause I was like, they're gonna think I'm super weird. But looking back, I'm able to see it really helped me. Educating myself and knowing these things helped me to be able to navigate tough conversations with boyfriends and set boundaries and to be able to be confident in really like knowing what I wanted when it came to my relationships and stuff. And yeah, and I'm so grateful because I ended up being single a lot longer than I quote unquote planned. Right? And I dated a lot and I am so grateful that I had that knowledge before I was engaged or before I got married.

Harper:

Right, yeah. I think it's so important. And that ties to, if we're not learning it from good sources, people are curious, they have questions and this is something so important and so beautiful. And also something so misunderstood and so ill-talked about. And so if we're not talking about it in positive ways, we're going to be taught somehow either through the

media, through movies, through music, through other industries, like the pornography industry who really don't have our best interest in mind. To teach us things that are so core to what makes us God's children and what he wants for us and the beauty in that. So I feel like it's important to talk about it because if we're not learning about it from good sources with our best interest in mind, we're going to learn about it regardless. So might as well learn the positive side of it. Because we're gonna, we're getting thrown these messages all the time.

Creed:

Totally. Do you have any thoughts on the, the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with regard to sexuality and how the two fit together?

Harper:

Yeah, I do. I love the doctrine behind health and sexuality that sex is God given, that it's God sanctioned, that he made our bodies perfectly. There were no mistakes when he made our bodies. It wasn't like, oops, Oh no, I messed up like that wasn't supposed to be there. And so I know that he made us perfectly in that our desires and that the potential for this kind of intimacy is given by God. And also that self-mastery is important, that chastity and bridling our passions. And also the doctrine behind sexuality is openness and plainness and being able to teach where people are when they're ready to receive. And just like any other doctrine, but that it's beautiful and that God wants us to know about this. And it shouldn't be shrouded in secrecy. Kind of like how it has been such a taboo topic.

Creed:

Yeah, I think it's super important that we as young single adults, I mean Crishelle is not single. She's still young though, but us young adults, we are you know, we're going to be the leaders of the church and I think it's awesome that we are starting, at least at the age that we are, with getting really comfortable talking about these subjects. Because, like you said, Harper if we're not talking about it in the proper wholeness type of way that it should be talked about, then the other instances of unhealthy sexuality, the parts that lack the wholeness are gonna be what's taught broadly. And so as you know, potential leaders in the church and our communities and our families, it's so important for us to get educated and

Laura Brotherson's books as well as many other people's perspectives about wholeness and healthy sexuality with the gospel perspective is so important too be educated on.

Crishelle:

Listeners, we will link all of these books that we're referring to in the show notes. So don't even worry. You don't even have to pull out your phone or your pencil to write that down. We will link them. You have access to them. And I will ask the next question. So what does the research say? What does the research support as far as the doctrine of the church? And maybe what is it say the opposite [side]?

Harper:

Yeah, so that's a really good question. So it both supports and strengthens the doctrine by showing that married, connected, unified sex is reported as the best sex. And so if we dig a little bit deeper into that, you can really see that healthy sexuality is more than just a physical thing. If that's the case, because there's more there for married couples, there's that unity, there's that trust, there's the emotional connection and oftentimes the spiritual that's there. And so it really is more than this just a physical action. And it's shown by that research that shows that married or connected sex is reported as the best sex. But it also counters the doctrine in saying that masturbation and pornography is not only okay, but it's good before marriage as a way to learn and so that is one of the ways that it kind of refutes or goes against the ideas or the doctrine of self mastery and chastity and bridling our passions while also knowing what we can know and being clear about what sex and healthy sexuality are. So it's more of that free for all instead of the knowing but also the bridling.

Creed:

Yeah. I thought about that too, cause I've heard research that has talked about, Oh, pornography can be a good way to learn about how to have better sex with your partner, but I definitely disagree that there are, there's just other options and pornography is just such a dangerous option to learn how to be more better sexually intimate with your partner, with your married partner. There's these wonderful books, especially if we're coming from an LDS perspective, right? There's books out there that people who have the same values as the doctrine of the church, but who have been able to talk about it in such a way that

brings in all the good aspects and teaches us well how to have wonderful sex with our partners. And we don't need to view another person's experience. We've talked before about how it sexually scripts us for how it's supposed to look, how it's supposed to feel, and if we're not fitting that ideal image, something's wrong with us. So pornography, there's just lots of problems that you can run into with pornography. So let's get a handle on these good books and not have to worry about the dangerous option of pornography.

Harper:

And it's like you're watching someone that's not your partner. And so the best way to learn and to know what your partner wants is to ask your partner, is to talk to them, and to have this open conversation and to be able to learn together instead of this separate thing.

Crishelle:

How do you think the research and the doctrine work together?

Harper:

Yeah. So kind of like in that last question that we answered, it both supports and strengthens but also counters, but they can and I think should work together because the doctrine is really the backbone. It's the foundation. And it gives that clear perspective from Heavenly Father that can really help us to navigate and to know and fully understand what he thinks of healthy sexuality and what the potential is for us. And knowing the doctrine really. And the research has helped me too in so many ways. I was kinda, I was laughing with Laura, we were chatting and said, Laura, I know I'm not married, but I know a lot about sex. And it's kind of, it seems kind of ironic, but I don't think it is because by knowing both the doctrine and the research together, I'm better able to identify the counterfeits because I know what the doctrine is. I know what heavenly father thinks of, I've had a healthy sexuality and I know what the potential is for us. And so really it helps me as I learn and I hear different things. I know what the spirit has affirmed in the past. And so hearing those other things, I can think, Hey it doesn't, it's not a temptation. It's just more of like a, Oh, that's not right. That's not coming from the place that I know what healthy sexuality is. And so it really does help you. Knowledge is power and education is powerful because it helps you to identify when the source maybe isn't coming from a place that wants to teach in your best interest. Maybe it's something that wants to try to entrap you instead. And so I think, I

strongly believe that knowing those two different sides, they work together and they help you to be better informed to make better decisions.

Creed:

As you've mentioned, you've worked with Laura Brotherson and what final words would you have for young adults based on what you've learned working with her?

Harper:

Yeah, I think that what I would want young adults to know from my experience working with her and from reading her books and countless others is that healthy sexuality is God given. It's beautiful and wonderful and something that we can and should be talking about. That there is that balance that exists between knowing and understanding and being very clear. But also being reverent and being sacred. It doesn't have to be degraded. It can be something that we talk about openly but also, something that we can know and it benefits us in whatever stage we're at, whether we're single and not dating, dating someone, engaged, married, long time married, these principles, they transcend that timeframe and they truly help us to be better and so I feel like my call to action is to get educated from these godly sources that do understand the doctrine and the research and can clearly and reverently teach us and so we can have that true source and know what it really should be and what it can be.

Crishelle:

Wonderful. Thank you so much Harper. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, your light, your insights. I'm really excited about this podcast and this episode and I am so grateful for your willingness to share with us. It's been awesome. These aren't my ideas, but I'm happy to be the middle man between these wonderful people that have written these things and from the prophets and from the doctrine and just kind of be that voice to maybe talk about it a little bit more. Love that. And Harper, before you go, will you tell us about the different books that Laura Brotherson has available?

Harper:

Yes. So I love these books. I'm so excited. So her newest one is From Honeymoon to Happily Ever After and it really is like this complete guide for preparing for the honeymoon

stage. And it really does, it can help single people and married people as well as preparing for that honeymoon. Her other books also include *And They Were Not Ashamed* that you mentioned earlier, as well as *Knowing Her Intimately* and other articles. She really does have such great resources that you can also find on her website. And something that she's doing right now is offering a discount. And so we've also included that promo code for the *Honeymoon to Happily Ever After* book.

Crishelle:

Those will be in the show notes. We'll definitely link all of those so that you all can take advantage of those. And just a spoiler alert, maybe not a spoiler, I guess a spoiler alert if you're my friend and you're getting married, that's my favorite gift to give to my friends who are getting married, are any of these books and maybe even all three.

Creed:

Totally. I'm really excited to be able to read those books. I haven't yet read anything from Laura, so I'm excited to use that discount code, get that new book and her other ones too. Those will be great.

Harper:

Awesome. I'm excited for you guys.

Crishelle:

This is great. Fantastic.