

**POODS**

**equipping you to guide your daughters and sons  
to be educated, embodied, and empowered  
in their sexual development**

# **A Quick Reference Guide: Sex Education for Moms**

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# Intro

This short manual is intended to guide you as moms in educating yourself about sex through a faith-based lens for the purpose of being able to equip your daughters and sons to have a healthy understanding of sex. This guide was developed through multiple conversations I've had with women over the years who were asking for resources on this very topic or were sharing their personal stories of sexual trauma and brokenness. In addition, I pulled from my own journey of undoing harmful messages around sex that I had received primarily from church culture and regrettably also perpetuated in my early years in marriage and ministry.

While this guide will not be comprehensive nor exhaustive, it will be a quick reference for you to find where you need to go next in your particular story and for your particular kids. Some of the content will fit you and your story, but some of it may not. Please engage with the Holy Spirit as you read by embracing what is for you and releasing what is not.

Also, as I prepared this guide, it quickly became apparent to me that there really wasn't one core resource I could point to as the best resource for talking with your kids about sex. What I hope to offer here are a few **goals** and **guideposts** for your conversations with your kids regarding sex, a look at the **foundational element** to a healthy marital sexual relationship, a list of **resources** that may be helpful to you, and **wise words** from other moms also walking this journey of wanting to facilitate healthy conversations with their kids regarding sex.

Ultimately, I hope that by engaging this guide, you feel equipped to look at your own beliefs around sex in such a way that you are empowered from the inside out to have healthy conversations with your kids about sex.

*Disclaimer: ODR is not a mental health provider; rather, we are a personal growth focused, faith-based non-profit organization. Any information provided in this quick reference guide is not intended to replace that of a mental health professional and/or medical provider.*

# You First

As I prepared this guide and reached out to other moms for input, it was clear that the most important piece to having beneficial conversations with your kids around the topic of sex is pursuing your own healing. So, before we dive into goals and resources, the most important thing I can offer you is an invitation toward reflection and healing, by asking you to pause and take a curious posture toward your own sexual development, the messaging you received, and what you currently believe.

There may be things in your own story that carry an undertone of shame that you have yet to bring to the light and receive healing. There may be messages you received (whether from inside or outside church culture) as you were growing up that shaped your beliefs around sex in harmful ways. There may be places of pain, harm, struggle, or brokenness to look with curiosity instead of judgment, bringing those thoughts, wounds, and words to Jesus for Him to heal and speak truth. May you engage gentleness toward yourself in this process.

In light of this, it is valuable to reflect on your own story, identify places that need healing, and invite Jesus into all that you find. Here we go...

## **The Significance of Making Sense of Your Sexual Story**

Our sexuality is a vulnerable and valuable part of our stories and selves, meant to be handled with special care. As you prepare to talk with your kids, it is vital to make sense of your own sexual story, so that you can hold space for their curiosity and questions. The making sense doesn't mean you have to have everything resolved in your story; rather, making sense means that you have taken an honest look at the sexual parts of your story and have a sense of being received by Jesus in those parts of your story.

To begin, I want to invite you to take a moment to consider your own sexual story. Take a moment to reflect on and journal about the question on the next page.



1) When/how was sex explained to you? What messages did you internalize from that experience (and others like it)?

### **Impacts of the Fall on Your Sexual Story**

Because we exist in a fallen world, the effects of the fall are all around us...our sexuality is not exempt. Because we are humans living in the reality of the fall, sexual trauma and struggles and sin are a reality. How sexual trauma, sexual struggles, and sexual sin impact us will vary from person to person.

The good news is that just as every part of our life has existed in the context of the fall in the story of the Gospel, every part of our life can be brought under the authority of Jesus at the point of redemption where restoration can begin. To remind yourself of this, I invite you to turn to the next page to reflectively read the summary of the Gospel found there.



2) How does the Gospel impact your view of your own story?

## **The Gospel: A Summary**

You were **created** in the Image of God. He began His story with creation and He called what He created **good**. There are echoes of that **original design** in you.

But. That good, original design has been tainted by **the fall**. You entered a fallen world when you were born. Creation has been altered...**broken**. You entered a broken world. You yourself have been broken by **sin done to you** and **sin you've done** yourself, your very sin separating you from God.

Then. Jesus entered the story. His **death and resurrection** brought about **redemption**. Now you can be brought **from darkness and death to light and life**. When we follow Jesus with our lives, we are **redeemed**.

The story doesn't end there. As long as we are alive on this earth, we have the opportunity to join with Jesus' **restorative work** by engaging in His transformation of our very selves. We have the opportunity to enter into His **healing** of the wrongs that have been done to us. We also have the opportunity to engage His **transformation** of ourselves through **confession and repentance** of our own sin, ultimately believing Him to **make us new**, as we live connected to the Holy Spirit. He reconnects the echoes of our original design to our current reality. And as we experience His restoration of ourselves, we have the opportunity to **bring restoration** to all the people and places our lives touch.

This is a **Gospel understanding** of ourselves. This is the **story** we find ourselves in today. This is the **lens** through which we are being invited to view God, ourselves, and all of life...including our sexual story.

Now, I want to invite you further into the “making sense” of your own sexual story. With honesty toward yourself and God, consider how sexual trauma, sexual struggles, and/or sexual sin has or is impacting you.\*

### Questions for Reflection

To make sense of your sexual story and to engage how sexual trauma and/or sexual struggles may have impacted (or are impacting) you, please take some time to reflect on each of these questions.



3) Have you experienced sexual trauma or abuse? If so, what have you engaged to pursue the healing of that? Have you ever told anyone?



4) Have you experienced sexual struggles? If so, what have you engaged to pursue the healing of that? Have you ever told anyone?

*\* If at any point you feel triggered or dysregulated (disoriented, dissociated, disrupted), I would recommend sharing with a safe, trusted person what you are feeling and pursuing a licensed, trauma-informed therapist to support you through processing these questions.*



5) What are the messages about sex you currently believe? Where did those messages come from?



6) Does your spouse know your sexual history? How does that affect you/your spouse?

As you reflect on those answers, take another moment to read again the story of the Gospel to yourself, as a banner over your story, and to remind yourself of the ongoing and powerful work of Jesus to heal and transform.

### **Sexuality Under the Authority of Jesus Exercise**

As you have paused to consider your sexual story and how sexual brokenness may have or is impacting you, I want to first acknowledge how brave it was to do so. That is no small feat. Second, I highly encourage you to share this with a safe person. Speaking it aloud (to someone who is emotionally and relationally safe) helps lift the secrecy and shame. If you have experienced sexual trauma, first, I am so sorry. Truly.

Second, I highly encourage you to pursue trauma-informed therapy to begin the healing process of that trauma (if you have not already done so).



Finally, as you have looked at this area of your life bravely with honesty, I invite you to bring your sexuality under the authority of Jesus for Him to heal and purify and bring freedom. This would sound as simply as a prayer like this, "Jesus, I invite your authority over my life, including my sexuality. I ask you heal and purify and bring freedom to that part of me."

This doesn't mean that magically everything's okay now, this step is simply the step of inviting Jesus into and declaring His authority over this area of your life.

### **Where to Go from Here**

You have spent time reflecting on your own sexual story, including any sexual trauma or sexual struggles, and you have been encouraged to bring your sexuality under the authority of Jesus. Now the most significant thing you can do is take the next steps toward the healing of anything you've uncovered through these exercises. Take a moment to prayerfully consider what the next steps toward healing are for you in the area of sexuality.

If you are unsure what to do next, I highly recommend pursuing trauma-informed therapy with a licensed professional therapist. Additionally, at the end of this quick reference guide, there are a handful of other resources that may be helpful for you in your healing journey.

Below, write down the next step you will take.



Next Step:

# The Foundation of Sex

The foundation to a healthy sexual relationship is love. And while this may seem obvious to some, it isn't to everyone. Ironically, church culture has actually been a part (at times) of creating a broken foundation toward sex, creating a perspective of marital duty and obligation...with a slant toward sex as something men need and women give. This is faulty and harmful (and not Biblical). In an effort to speak truth to faulty nuances found in many "Christian" marriage books and teachings, what follows is a simple but clear foundation for an emotionally healthy and Biblically-sound marital sexual relationship.

The foundation to a healthy sexual relationship is love. As you prepare to talk with your kids about sex, it is vital to lay the foundation within your own mind (and then also for your kids) that love is the precursor to sex. Especially for Christians, love is actually meant to be the precursor to everything we do in life (including sex within marriage).

However, sometimes Christians and church culture get tripped up by the verses found in 1 Corinthians 7 that talk about spouses' bodies belonging to one another. While these verses ought to move us toward greater love for ourselves and our spouse, at times these verses have been misused to perpetuate a message of duty and obligation...usually toward the wife for the husband...and potentially even open the door to harm within marriage.

I do not believe that duty and obligation were what God intended. If anything, these verses are meant to represent a posture of **both** the husband and wife offering love (and pleasure) toward one another (not an emphasis on one gender serving the other) nor either spouse "owing" something to the other.

So, what do we do with the "belong" passage in 1 Corinthians 7? We tether it with these verses on **love**: Matthew 22:39, John 13:34-35, and 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Love is the foundation to and marker of the Christian life. Love is characterized by honoring one another, valuing one another, and looking out for another's good. It is not self-seeking, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13. If we understand these "love" verses to be the foundation of our entire way of living and being as Christians, then these verses would also be foundational to anything and everything we do in marriage.

If it is true that my body belongs to my spouse and my spouse's body belongs to me, then my approach toward his body and his approach toward mine must come from a place of love. Love is the foundational tenet of the Christian faith and of our marriage vows. So, in belonging to one another, our approach to one another's bodies must absolutely flow from the motivation of love.

If our bodies belonging to one another in the context of marriage is not an expression of love, not only does it violate marriage vows but also (and even more so) it violates the basics of Christian relating. The foundational marker of the Christian life is love, so we absolutely must build the concept of our bodies belonging to one other in marriage on the foundation of love.

This understanding allows us to respect one another and honor one another's limits and boundaries even within marital sex. This invites both spouses to become curious about one another's bodies and what brings pleasure, rather than an emphasis on one gender serving the other sexually. This foundation invites both spouses to honor what doesn't feel safe, comfortable, or loving to the other spouse because any and all sex would be motivated by love. This approach allows us to build our relating on the foundation on the Christian principles of love and respect of another human as our first filter prior to the idea of belonging to one another.

Adjusting our mindset to love as the foundation allows us to lay a healthy foundation within ourselves (and for our kids) regarding sex.

A helpful resource to dive further into both the practical application and the theology of all this is *The Great Sex Rescue* by Sheila Wray Gregoire.

Also, if you feel you are in a relationship where actions (sexual or otherwise) are not coming from a foundation of love, I would recommend first talking with your spouse about it. If your spouse is unwilling to pursue transformation in this or doesn't really hear you, then I would recommend getting support through a licensed trauma therapist and/or looking into these resources:

*The Emotionally Healthy Woman* by Geri Scazzero

<https://leslievernick.com/>

*The Emotionally Destructive Marriage* by Leslie Vernick

# Goals for Conversations with Your Kids

With the steps of reflection, processing, and creating a solid foundation behind us, we can move forward toward Goals and Guideposts for talking with your kids about sex.

When you think about talking with your kids about sex and sexual development, three of the most important goals to aim for in any approach you take or any conversation you have is to equip them to become educated, embodied, and empowered.

## **Educated**

At the base, offering your child (or teen) solid factual information about anatomy, puberty, and sex equips him or her for overall health but is also key in helping protect him or her against predators. Knowledge is empowering. Equipping your child with age-appropriate facts and terminology allows him or her to become educated on the topic of bodies and sex. Age-appropriately guiding your child through conversations about what sex is, why it is, and how it works actually equips him or her to make wise, informed decisions.

## **Embodied**

One of the most important aspects of sexual development is to remain (or become) embodied. To be embodied is to feel at home in and connected to one's own body. Equipping your child (or teen) with a posture of awareness, acceptance, and love toward his or her own body allows him or her the potential to remain or become embodied in regard to his or her sexual development and eventually sex. To disconnect from one's own body or to view one's body as bad will negatively impact his or her development

## **Empowered**

It is vital that your child (or teen) feels empowered to have agency over his or her own body and eventually sex. Two of the most important ways you can equip your child to become empowered in his or her body is to equip her/him with the tools of consent and body boundaries. A few practical steps for empowering your child toward consent and body boundaries are on the next page.

## **Practical Steps for Consent and Body Boundaries**

Simple ways you can begin early in equipping your child to have a framework for consent and healthy body boundaries is empowering her or him with the freedom to say no to hugs, kisses, affection, and physical contact in general. Those boundaries can be applied to strangers but also to siblings, extended family, and even parents. While this may seem countercultural to some families, it is key in early empowerment toward understanding consent and having a sense of personal body boundaries. If a child learns that she can set limits on physical touch in general, she will be better equipped to later set physical boundaries in sexual contact.

Personal body boundaries may also include being empowered to make other decisions about her or his own body including things like hairstyle, clothing, food preferences, etc.

Empower your child to not only pay attention to his or her body but also to have personal agency over it. The ability to say “no” and express what she or he does and doesn’t want is powerful.

# Guideposts for Conversations with Your Kids

Rather than a specific method for conversations about sex, you'll find guideposts here for conversations with your kids about sex. I intentionally wrote "conversations" and not "conversation," because it's really important to note that talking with your kids about sex ought to be made up of multiple conversations as they grow and mature. Rather than having "the talk" one time, I would encourage you to take an approach that is an open conversation with your kids, allowing them to freely approach you with topics and questions over the years.

When it comes to these many conversations you'll have with your child around anatomy, sex, development, and puberty, it's helpful to have the following principles in mind as supportive scaffolding. Allow the conversations to be:

## **Built on relational capital created prior to (and outside) conversations about sex**

The most foundational thing you can do to prepare for healthy, open, and beneficial conversations around anatomy and sex is to have a strong relationship with your child outside of these conversations. It is not enough to make a point to have conversations about the topic of sex if your relationship with your child in general is disconnected, lacking trust, and/or void of bonding. Take a moment to reflect on the following questions:

"Am I having open conversations with my child about other areas of his life?"  
"Do I know her interests, dreams, fears, and hopes?"  
"Does my child feel safe talking with me about his feelings and emotions? Why or why not?"

If you want to equip your child well about his or her body and sex, it is a necessary precursor to build and invest in your overall relationship with your child first and simultaneously.

## **Age-appropriate**

Because each child and family is unique, I do not have a recommended age for certain conversations; however, as you have conversations with your

children, it is important to keep the conversations age-appropriate (and situation specific). The best guidepost for what is age-appropriate for your child is to pay attention to what kinds of questions he or she is asking around the topics of anatomy and sex, and then lean into the topics directly at the level (or specificity) that he or she is asking. You may also choose to prompt conversations before certain milestones (conversations about body changes before puberty hits, etc.) by being aware of upcoming developmental milestones and equipping your child appropriately.

### **Led by your child's questions and curiosity**

If you do have a connected relationship with your child, it is likely he or she already started asking you questions about his or her body, anatomy, and possibly even sex. Welcome the questions, respond with facts as much as possible, and allow the questions to guide you for where your child is curious and cognitively developing around this topic.

### **Honest yet secure**

What does "honest yet secure" mean? When it comes to sexual topics, questions can sometimes be disorienting to answer. Age-appropriate honesty with your children is key to maintaining their trust; however, it is also important to understand that as the parent it is key to maintain a sense of calm and stability (you as solid and secure) as they are looking to you for a sense of security as they navigate these highly vulnerable topics. So, honest yet secure means that if you feel disoriented or triggered (dysregulated) by one of their questions, take a moment to pause and regroup internally (becoming calm and stable within yourself) and let them know you either don't know and will find out or that you'll need a moment to gather your thoughts.

If you become dysregulated (disoriented, distressed, or triggered) by their questions, your child may incorrectly feel that there is something shameful around himself or herself and/or may pull back out of a sense of responsibility for causing you emotional disruption. Even if you become dysregulated, assure your child that there is nothing wrong with asking the question that was asked.

This is also why it is key to work through your own sexual story and history of sexual brokenness so that you are less disrupted by your child's questions and more at peace in communicating with calm and a sense of stability around sex.

## Positive

Sex was created by God for mutual love and joy and connection between a husband and a wife. Allow this paradigm to show up in the conversations you have with your kids about sex, allowing a pure yet positive view of sex to come forward.

Sometimes faith-based messages around sex can have a predominantly negative approach, as though sex is to be avoided, taboo, or somehow wrong. While sex can be hijacked and corrupted by sin, at the base, sex was created by God as a good and beautiful gift. Framing it as such is powerful in helping shape your child's perspective of sex.

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## Developing a pure paradigm

God designed sex to be good and beautiful and connective and intimate and loving...and He placed parameters around sex. There are so many nuances to this concept that cannot be fully developed here; however, as you have conversations with your kids about sex, it is important (in age-appropriate ways) to build in the concept of keeping sex pure.

A pure mindset towards sex encompasses both single and married seasons, it views all humans as made in the image of God (not sexualized objects), and addresses the way lust, pornography, and sex outside of marriage (as well as many other possible things) harm your personal purity (whether single or married).

At the same time, it is essential to incorporate a Gospel perspective alongside this pure framework for sex, so that your kids know that Jesus is big enough to heal, redeem, and restore any sexual struggles, brokenness, and missteps. It is also significant to share that God's love is not contingent on their purity, but that He desires purity for them for their good.



# Resources

*Disclaimer: These resources were curated by a group of women from a variety of backgrounds. While I have not read every resource cover to cover, I trust the women who recommended these resources. Some resources may be especially beneficial to you and/or your family, while others may not. Please feel free to embrace what works for you and release what doesn't.*

**\*Important\*** Also, the recommended resources for your kids are intended to be a part of a connected approach where you are reading with and/or dialoguing with your child(ren) over the content, not simply handing off the book as a stand-alone resource.

## Faith-Based Resources

### For You

Start Here 

*The Great Sex Rescue* by Sheila Wray Gregoire

*Content Warning: some of the stories of sexual trauma may be triggering, use discretion as you read. You can still gain the core principles of this book even if you choose to skip over the personal stories.)*

**\*\*\*Note:** if you have read any of the best-selling, faith-based marriage books from the past 20-30 years, I highly recommend starting with reading through the rubric from *The Great Sex Rescue* and reflecting on which resources may have negatively impacted your understanding of marriage and/or sex. Their rubric shows the helpful/harmful teachings of the current best-selling, faith-based marriage books on the market. To access it, go to the following website (you will need to enter your email address to gain access to this rubric):

<https://baremarriage.com/gsr-rubric/>

## Healing from Sexual Brokenness

*Unwanted* by Jay Stringer

[www.teresawhitting.com](http://www.teresawhitting.com)

## Addressing Pornography

*Unwanted* by Jay Stringer

*Good Pictures/Bad Pictures, Jr.* by Kristen A. Jenson, MA (a picture book)

*Content Warning: Some of the descriptions seem explicit for a children's picture book. So, although this is a children's picture book, I'd recommend it more as a parenting resource rather than a book to hand off to your children. The overall strategy of the book and parenting guide at the back are spot on, though, for parents to read through for themselves.*

## Healing from (General) Trauma and Shame

*The Soul of Shame* by Curt Thompson

*The Soul of Desire* by Curt Thompson

EMDR Therapy

## Healing from an Emotionally Destructive Marriage

*The Emotionally Destructive Marriage* by Leslie Vernick

*The Emotionally Destructive Relationship* by Leslie Vernick

<https://leslievernick.com/>

*Content Warning: While Leslie Vernick's work offers practical insight for those finding themselves in destructive relationships, there may be stories that are triggering. Read with discernment.*

**Unplanned Pregnancy** 

<https://www.care-net.org/>

**Protecting Your Children Online** 

<https://www.poweroverpredators.org/>

**General Parenting** 

<https://flourishinghomesandfamilies.com/>

### **For Your Kids**

**Early Body Safety** 

*God Made All of Me* by Justin S. Holcomb & Lindsey A. Holcomb

**Unplanned Pregnancy** 

<https://www.care-net.org/>

**Engaged Couples** 

*Honeymoon of Your Dreams* by Dr. Walt Larimore

## Non-Religious Resources

### For You

#### Marriage

*The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* by John M. Gottman, Ph.D., and Nan Silver

This book is incredibly helpful for building the strength of your marriage. If, as you explored some of your story, you found that in general you are wanting to invest in your marriage this book would be a great place for you and your spouse to start.

#### General Parenting

*Parenting From the Inside Out* by Daniel Siegel, M.D., and Mary Hartzell, M.Ed.

If, as you read through this reference guide, you found that you want to strengthen your parenting in general, your understanding of your child, and your connection with your child, this book would be a great place to start. It will help you begin to look at your own story and process how that is impacting your current parenting while also offering tools and ways forward.

### For Your Kids

#### Early Body Safety

<https://products.nurturedfirst.com/the-body-safety-toolkit/>

#### Anatomy & Sex

“Age-Appropriate Books to Talk to Your Kids About Sex” from *TulsaKids* online magazine is a great resource which includes a plethora of book recommendations (some faith based, some non-religious) with clear descriptions of each (and content warnings as needed):

<https://www.tulsakids.com/age-appropriate-books-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-sex/>

## Puberty

### Girls

*The Care & Keeping of You: The Body Book for Younger Girls* by Valerie Lee Schaefer

*The Care & Keeping of You 2: The Body Book for Older Girls* by Dr. Cara Natterson

### Boys

*The Boy's Body Book* by Kelli Dunham, RN

*Guy Stuff: The Body Book for Boys* by Dr. Cara Natterson

# Wise Words

I asked a group of trusted moms to share their insights on talking with your kids about sex. Here are some of the wise words they shared:



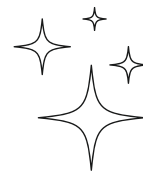
“The less embarrassment or shame you have around the topic or your body the easier it will be to communicate with love and truth to your kids.”

“I think it’s super important to explore and let God heal our own sexual histories. And everyone’s history looks different. Some will look like lots of acts that you’ve done or had done to you. Some will have lots of messages or thoughts and others will have both. Just because you weren’t sexually active doesn’t mean you don’t have a sexual history. It includes how you learned about sex, what you’ve thought about sex, and so on. It’s never too late to start the healing journey.”

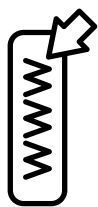


“My advice to any parent getting ready to talk to their kids about sex is to deal with their own shame regarding their sexuality so they can be freed to talk more openly (but appropriately) with their children.”

“The work of Teresa Whiting is wonderful, especially for moms with sexual brokenness in their stories who are now trying to guide their children into healthier relationships: [teresawhiting.com](https://teresawhiting.com).”

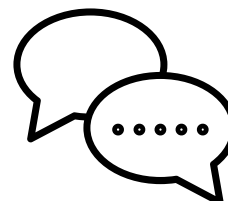


“The main thing I would encourage moms to do is talk about sex respectfully and casually. As my boys have been growing up, if a conversation is heading in that direction, I resist the temptation to change the subject and take it in another direction. Creating a space where sex talk isn't off limits but instead creates an opportunity to celebrate it within God-honoring relationships is important to me.”



“One thing parents need to understand about raising kids today is the way that kids can be exploited and even trafficked without leaving their homes. With the online access kids have, parents can be unaware of the world they can step into without parents knowing. My favorite resource for digital education is [Power over Predators](#).”

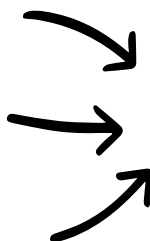
“The other bit of advice I found helpful, is to practice saying words and phrases with your spouse that you plan to say to your kids so you can hear yourself say them out loud. It kind of breaks the ice and makes it less weird for you. Also, be ready for your kids to ask anything!”



“A marker of a healthy marriage is being able to communicate with your spouse about what you are/are not comfortable with in your sexual relationship. In light of that, I think it’s really important to empower our sons and daughters to someday communicate about what they are comfortable/uncomfortable with in sex and also to respect those places of consent/not consent in his or her spouse.”



“I think parents need to keep talking to their kids at all ages. Be a safe place without judgment, without criticism, but a safe place where they can be honest even if they don’t make the decisions we want them to make. They need a safe place to land at the end of the day. Be the parent you wish you had.”



**And most of all...**

“I think I want to hear as a mom that it’s ok to mess up or feel awkward. There is lots of grace. It’s important to pray about it all and invite God into the process.”

Special thanks to all the moms and dads who contributed their insights, recommended resources, and words of wisdom to this project.



This reference guide was created by Original Design Restored, a non-profit ministry that aims to facilitate transformation at the intersection of the Gospel, Personal Narrative, and Experiential Learning. To learn more about who we are and what we do, visit our website: [www.originaldesignrestored.org](http://www.originaldesignrestored.org)