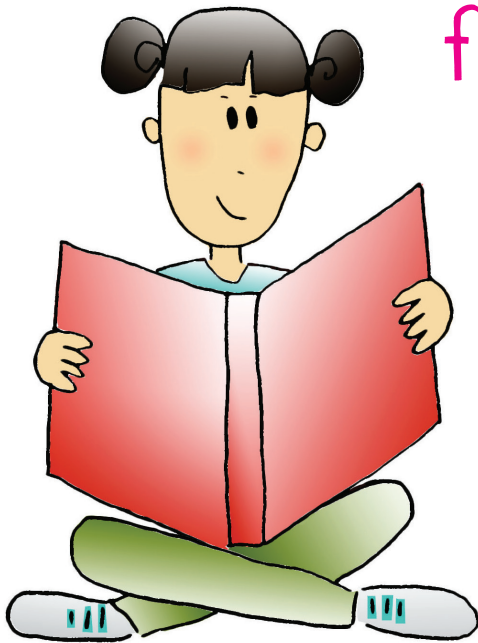


Growing up God's way

for girls



By Dr. Chris Richards and Dr. Liz Jones



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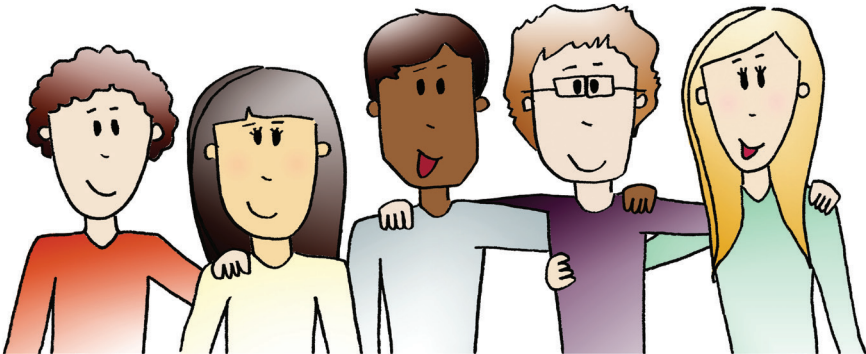
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Chapter I

An introduction to puberty

If you look around when you are out and about, you will see that there are people in many different stages of life. There are newborn babies in prams, toddlers in buggies, children on their way to school, adults driving to work and older people out for a short walk.

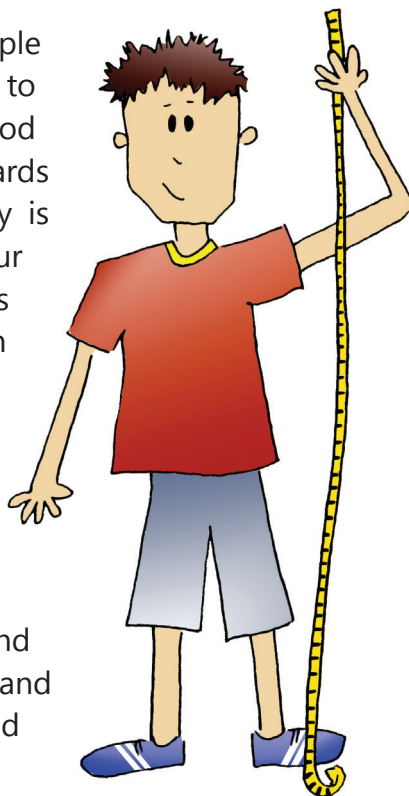


A king called Solomon saw these stages of life – he called them 'seasons' – and described them in a book of the Bible called Ecclesiastes:

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

During puberty young people move from one stage of life to another, as they leave childhood and move on their way towards becoming an adult. Puberty is a time of big changes to your body and mind. The changes are fast. Except as a newborn baby, there is no other time when you will grow as rapidly as you do during puberty. The changes are also big – both to your body (affecting its size, shape and nature) and to your mind (affecting how you understand things and make choices and plans for the future).



Growing up is God's idea

In thinking about the changes ahead, it is good to remember the following things.

● These changes are part of God's design for you

In His wisdom, God did not suddenly throw any of us into life as an adult; rather, He arranged it that we would grow into the role. Even Jesus, God's own Son, experienced these changes in His life as He 'increased in wisdom and in stature' (Luke 2:52).

● The timing of these changes is under God's control

God gives a baby his first teeth at about 6 months, just when the baby needs to move from a diet of mainly milk to a diet of mainly solid food. In the same way, the changes that God causes to happen in your body during puberty remind us just how good and wise He is. These changes are out of your control; but wait patiently and you will see that the results will be of great benefit to you.



● God promises to lead his people through all the stages of their lives

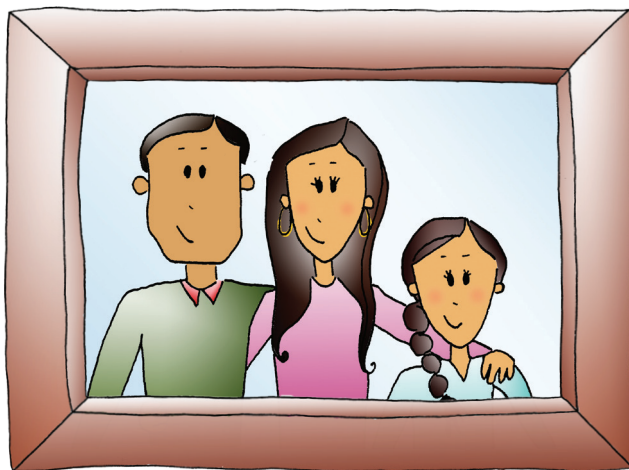
God knows everything that we go through and every change that happens to our bodies before it happens and in precise detail! King David knew of God's safe and steady hand on his life, even in the most challenging of circumstances, and so could say:

But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."
My times are in your hand.

Psalm 31:14,15

● Parents will help you through this stage of your life

You may be reading this book with one or both of your parents. God has given your parents a special responsibility to guide and help you through this exciting and demanding time. Remember to talk to them and listen to their advice!



● The changes have a God-given purpose

The changes of puberty are designed by God to prepare you for the future.

Puberty is designed to bring you to adulthood so that you can live independently of your parents and so that one day you may be able to marry and have a family of your own.

The changes of puberty will allow you to live for God in new ways as you have the exciting prospect of taking on new roles, meeting new people and seeing more of the world.

You are not ready... yet

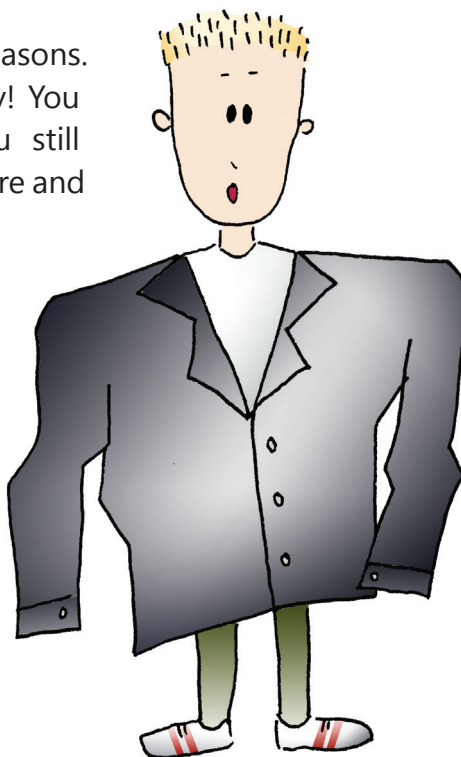
Right now, you would not be able to set up home and have a family if you wanted to. There are several reasons for this:

○ There are *emotional* reasons. You just do not feel ready! You may wisely feel that you still need the advice, regular care and protection of your parents.

○ There are *physical* reasons. Your body is not yet mature enough to have children.

○ There are *spiritual* reasons. You are not ready to face all the temptations and difficulties that come with adult responsibilities.

○ There are *legal* reasons. The law of most countries recognises the factors that we have just outlined and wisely makes it impossible for children to live independently of their parents or guardians. It is not possible to marry until the age of 18 in the UK and in most US states.



The changes that occur between now and the end of puberty will allow you to grow up, live independently and have a family of your own. Here are just three aspects of these changes:

- 1 You will develop new desires and feelings... so that you are attracted to the opposite sex.
- 2 You will change physically... so that you can become a mother.
- 3 You will grow in maturity... so that you can make responsible decisions.

The challenge of change

Important as these changes are, your most important challenge is to make wise choices. Your growing and maturing body and mind will allow you to do new and different things. You will have to decide whether you are going to do these things in the right way or the wrong way.

These are called *moral choices*. You will need to ask God to help you to make the right decisions when faced with these new moral choices. You



must prepare yourself to think and act with your new adult abilities and responsibilities in a way that pleases God.

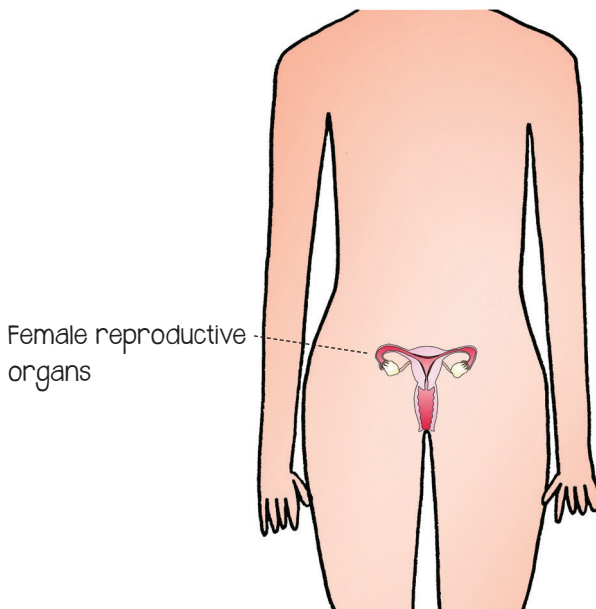
In this book we want to help you to learn about the changes in your body and mind that will happen during puberty. We also want to equip you to make good decisions that will please God as you get older.

Chapter 4

How your body changes

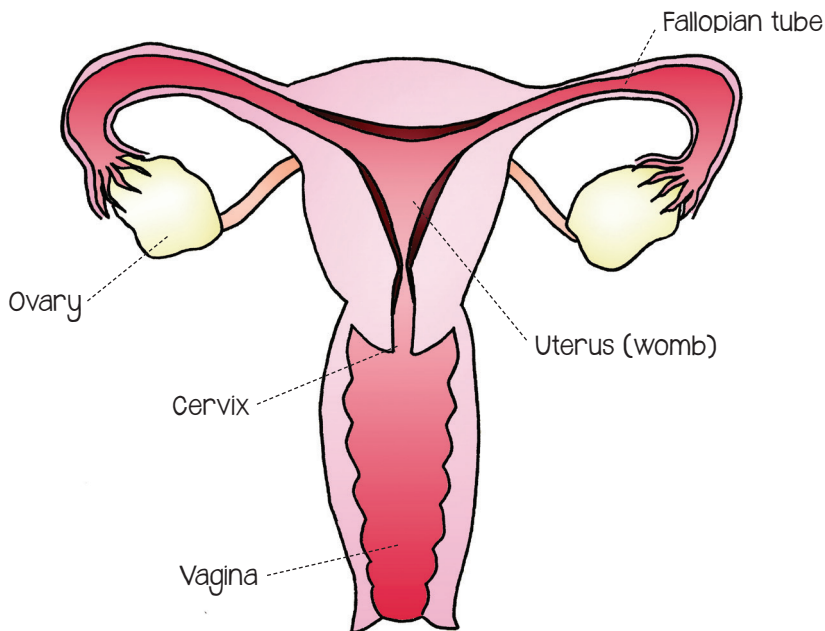
We start this section with a warning to be careful how you think and talk when we consider these changes. We need to refer to certain special parts of the body – parts that the apostle Paul refers to as ‘unpresentable’ (1 Corinthians 12:23). By this he means that they are parts that we normally choose to keep private and cover with our clothes. The verse tells us that we need to treat these parts with special ‘modesty’. That means that we must be careful only to talk about these things in a right and respectful way.

Before we say more about how the girl’s body changes in puberty, have a look at the diagram below which shows the parts of the body that allow a woman to have a baby (reproductive organs). Most of these are hidden inside the lower tummy.



A closer look...

With the help of the diagram below, identify the following parts of the body, which are in **bold**:



The two **ovaries** are the site where female eggs are stored. The ovary also produces the two female hormones called *oestrogen* and *progesterone*. Oestrogen causes many of the important changes of puberty – those *inside* the body that will allow her to have a baby as well as the *outward* changes, such as breast development that will allow her to feed her baby. Progesterone causes the lining of the uterus (womb) to thicken in preparation for pregnancy.

The **uterus** is also known as the 'womb'. This is the place where a baby develops until he or she is ready to be born.

The **fallopian tube** connects the ovary to the uterus.

The **cervix** is the entrance to the womb and separates it from the vagina. It is usually very narrow, but opens wide to allow a baby to be born.

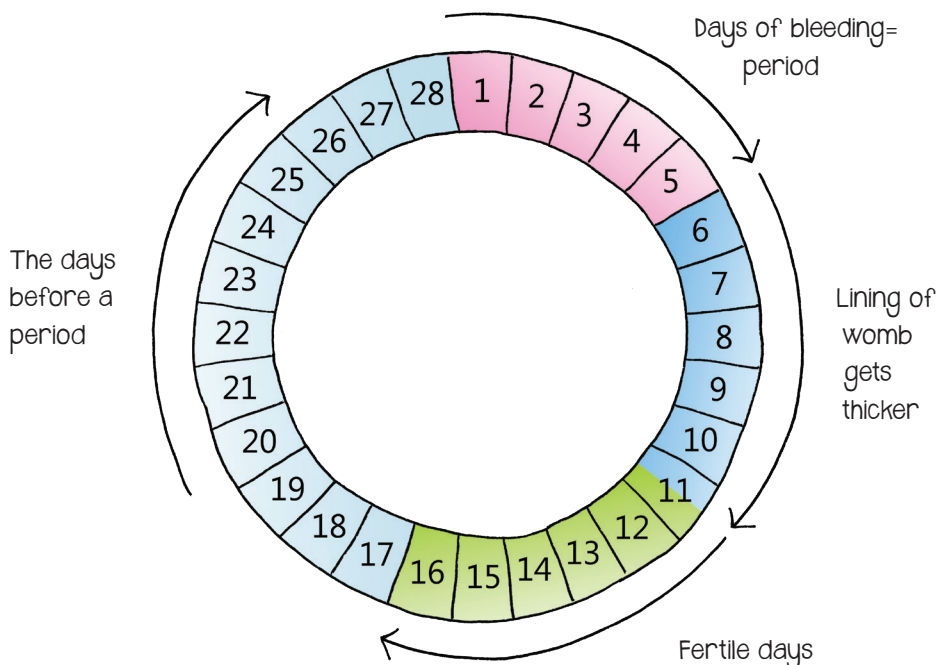
The **vagina** is also known as the birth canal. This is where the reproductive organs open to the outside of the body.

Having identified some important parts of a girl's body, we are now ready to examine some of the changes that take place in her body during puberty.

Change one - the menstrual cycle begins

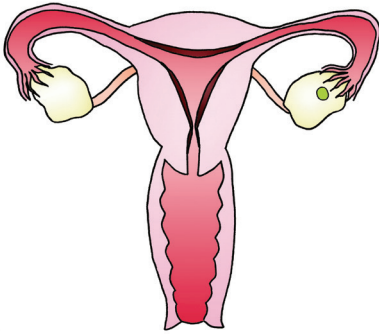
As well as bringing on the changes of puberty, the female hormones, oestrogen and progesterone, also control the process which God has designed to allow a woman to have a baby. This process involves the rise and fall of these hormones in a woman's body in an approximately 28-day pattern called the *menstrual cycle*. Unless a woman becomes pregnant, each of these cycles will involve a loss of blood from her vagina; this is called a *period*. Most young women start to have periods by 14 years of age.

Below is a wheel of days that represents a complete 28-day (monthly) menstrual cycle. The 5-day period (bleeding) is shown in pink. The 5 days of fertility (the time when she is able to become pregnant) are shown in green. This time of fertility is usually just before halfway through the monthly cycle. Work your way clockwise round the wheel, noting the different phases.

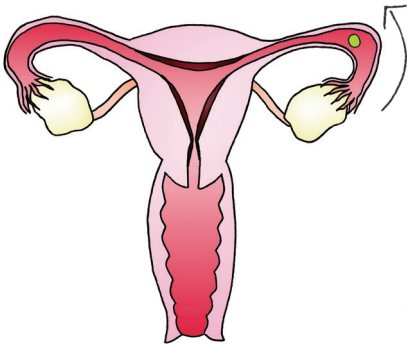


To understand why a woman has a period, let us follow an egg's journey from the ovary down the reproductive tract (see the opposite page). Usually during each menstrual cycle, a single egg leaves one of the ovaries and travels down the fallopian tube towards the womb.

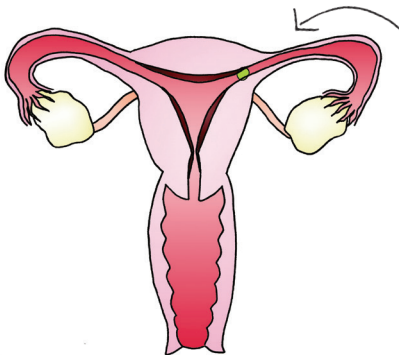
The egg's journey



The egg is stored in the ovary before release.



The egg is released into the fallopian tube.



The egg moves down the fallopian tube towards the womb, where the lining has been thickened with blood to receive an embryo if pregnancy occurs.