

Acts of Faith

Josh Duggar molested four of his sisters and a babysitter, parents tell Fox News

By [Abby Ohlheiser](#) June 4

Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar said Wednesday that there was nothing that could have prepared them for the trauma of learning years ago that their oldest son, Josh, had “improperly touched some of our daughters.”

“He said he was just curious about girls and he had gone in and just basically touched them over their clothes while they were sleeping; they didn’t even know he had done it,” Jim Bob Duggar told Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly, in the family’s first interview since the allegations were reported last month.

The parents confirmed publicly for the first time that their firstborn son — who had previously apologized for unspecified “wrongdoing” as a teenager — had molested multiple young girls.

The Duggars, whose family stars in TLC’s popular reality show “19 Kids and Counting,” spoke about the multiple incidents of molestation that occurred in their Arkansas home. According to Jim Bob and Michelle, the victims included four of their daughters, along with a family babysitter.

[*\[Josh Duggar’s sister comes to his defense following molestation reports\]*](#)

Two of those daughters — Jessa Seewald and Jill Dillard — chose to self-identify as their older brother’s victims in a joint interview with Kelly, a brief portion of which was broadcast Wednesday.

“We are victims, they can’t do this to us,” Dillard, now 24, said through tears, explaining her reaction to the widely reported allegations.

“The system that was set up to protect kids, both those who make stupid mistakes or have problems like this in their life and the ones that are affected by those choices — it’s greatly failed,” said Seewald, 22.

The Washington Post generally does not name victims of sexual assault; however, the two sisters have now spoken about the matter publicly.

The sisters’ full interview will air Friday night at 9; Fox News has distributed additional quotes from that interview

that have not yet been broadcast.

[A timeline of the molestation allegations against Josh Duggar]

In one quote distributed to reporters, Jessa Seewald said charges that her brother is a pedophile or child molester are “so overboard and a lie.”

On May 21, Josh Duggar, now 27, apologized for teenage “wrongdoing” after a tabloid report alleged that he had molested several young girls. Duggar also [resigned from his high-profile job](#) with the lobbying arm of the Family Research Council in Washington.

Duggar had five sisters when the incidents occurred, his parents said.

“This was like touching somebody over their clothes. There were a couple instances where he touched them under their clothes,” Jim Bob Duggar said.

“This was not rape or anything like that,” Duggar said.

[Hank Stuever: In Fox interview, the Duggars cast themselves as martyrs — and place their faith once more in TV]

“It was so important for us as parents to talk to our girls” and make sure “nothing else had happened,” Michelle Duggar said. The parents told Kelly that their children were unaware that Josh had touched them, until they spoke to their children about the incidents.

“We watched him like all the time, I took him to work with me. We just poured our life into him,” Jim Bob said. He added: “Nothing ever happened like that again in the girls’ bedrooms after that.”

“The ray of hope was that Josh had come and told us and that his heart was still soft. Because we wouldn’t have known about any of these things if he hadn’t had come and told us,” Jim Bob Duggar said.

In all, Jim Bob Duggar said, Josh confessed to his parents three times about improper touching in the home. “It was after that third time he came to us is where we really felt like, ‘You know what? ‘We have done everything we can as parents to handle this in-house. We need to get help,’” he said.

The parents then sent Josh to receive Christian-based counseling from a mentor in Little Rock, they said. Michelle also told Kelly that “all of our children received professional counseling, including Josh.” Jim Bob Duggar said the counseling came from “accredited professional counselor.”

Kelly also asked the Duggars about their troubled son's first interview with law enforcement. Josh gave a full account of his actions to the officer, Jim Bob Duggar said Wednesday. The conversation between Jim Bob, his son, a witness and an Arkansas state trooper did not directly result in any further law enforcement action against Josh Duggar. Instead, the teenager received a "stern" talking-to from the officer.

That officer was Joseph Hutchens, now serving a decades-long prison sentence for child pornography. "We had no idea what that officer was going through," Jim Bob said.

After seeking counseling and speaking with the police, the parents believed that Josh was "not at all" a threat to their daughters, they told Kelly.



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The allegations were detailed in a police report first obtained by In Touch Weekly. The report stemmed from a 2006 investigation into an anonymous tip alleging that Josh Duggar molested multiple girls in 2002 and 2003.

Kelly asked the Duggars about the release of that report, which redacted the names of the victims. Because it detailed the actions of juveniles, the family, along with Kelly, have said that it was released "illegally."

"They didn't want this out," Jim Bob said of his daughters. "Every victim should have the right to tell their own story,

not a tabloid.”

[How do evangelicals view the Duggars? It's complicated.]

At one point, Kelly asked Michelle Duggar about [a robocall](#) she made that, Kelly said, “suggested transgender people might want to go into the bathrooms of girls, locker rooms of girls, and that they may be child molesters.”

“I think that protecting young girls and not allowing young men and men in general to go into a girls’ locker room is just common sense,” Duggar said.

“But this is different, because you injected child molestation into it,” Kelly said.

At that point, Jim Bob Duggar told Kelly that his wife “actually said pedophile in that [robocall]. And actually a pedophile is an adult that preys on children. Joshua was actually 14 and just turned 15 when he did what he did.

“I think the legal definition is 16 and up for an adult preying on a child. He was a child preying on a child.”

[Listen to Michelle Duggar's anti-anti-discrimination robocall]

Kelly asked whether the Duggars could understand the reactions of critics to the molestation allegations.

“I can understand that,” Michelle Duggar said. “I can understand that, but I know that every one of us have done things wrong. That’s why Jesus came.”

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“I feel like this is more about — there is an agenda and there are people that are purposing to try to bring things out and twisting them to hurt and slander,” she said.

The family also addressed the future of its show, which completed its most recent season just days before Josh Duggar apologized. TLC pulled all episodes of the program from the air and online a day after the apology, and more than 20 advertisers have said they’re no longer interested in promoting their products during the show. But the network has not indicated its long-term plans for the show or possible spin-offs.

[Advertisers flee '19 Kids and Counting' in wake of scandal]

“I don’t know if the rest of our family should be punished” for the actions of one member, Jim Bob Duggar said, adding that the family will “be fine whether they film us or not.”

Josh Duggar has not commented publicly since his statement two weeks ago, when he said he had “acted inexcusably for which I am extremely sorry and deeply regret. I hurt others, including my family and close friends.”

He added: “I sought forgiveness from those I had wronged and asked Christ to forgive me and come into my life. I would do anything to go back to those teen years and take different actions.”

A one-hour special featuring more Duggar interviews will air on Fox News Friday at 9 p.m.

This post has been updated.

More reading:

[In a 2014 book, Josh Duggar admitted failures, temptations and ‘wrong thoughts’ as a teen](#)

[Rick Santorum on the Josh Duggar allegations: ‘I was sickened by it’](#)

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