

Abstinence: Why Sex Is Worth The Wait

Statistics and experience demonstrate that the Biblical prescription for sex within marriage is best for our kids.

“In real life, the unheralded, seldom discussed world of married sex is actually one that satisfies people the most.”¹

It’s a popular message among American educators, health care providers, politicians, entertainers, and those in the media: Let’s protect our youth and give them a better future.

Few disagree that the well-being and future of American youth are threatened by alcohol and drug use, cigarette smoking and violence. Lawsuits against tobacco companies and campaigns to tighten gun laws are popular topics in the mainstream media, and many in the entertainment industry are quick to speak out against drug and tobacco use.

Sadly, however, few in popular culture speak out or even acknowledge the overwhelming risk to youth from sex outside of marriage. They point to the serious problems of teenage pregnancy and abortion rates, but overlook and even deny the underlying problem of premarital sex.

The threat is substantial and the consequences severe. Currently, almost 50 percent of American youth engage in premarital sex before graduating from high school.

Rather than hearing a message of abstinence, our nation’s young people are bombarded with messages that encourage sex outside of marriage. Unbridled sexual activity threatens the well-being and future of our youth and our nation, and Americans can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to this problem. Our youth must hear the message of abstinence—at home, at school and in our culture.

Tracking the Consequences

Millions of Americans are paying a high price for engaging in sex outside of marriage. In 2001 the federal government released The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Sexual Health and Responsible Sexual Behavior, which contained the following information:

sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) infect approximately 12 million Americans each year; an estimated 40,000 new HIV infections occur each year; an estimated 1.37 million induced abortions occurred in 1996; and nearly one-half of pregnancies are unintended.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), STDs are a rising epidemic in our nation, with some 65 million Americans plagued with an incurable form. The rates of many STDs, including gonorrhea, genital herpes, and human papillomavirus (HPV), continue to rise rapidly. In addition, the viral chlamydia trachomatis is connected to pelvic inflammatory disease, which is the fastest growing cause of infertility. STDs, in fact, are a direct cause of infertility in both men and women, and an estimated 95 percent of cervical cancer cases are associated with HPV.

It is clear that sexual activity outside of marriage is not the best choice for an individual or society. The human body is not intended to function in this manner without facing serious, debilitating and, sometimes, deadly consequences. According to one prominent medical journal, "Social legitimization of promiscuous sexual activity has probably been one of the major stimuli for the proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases." It is documented that engaging in coitus [intercourse] from an early age increases one's risk of contracting an STD by the age of 30, due to: 1) increased number of sexual partners, and thus, exposure to their STDs; and 2) greater susceptibility of young adults. As a result of such indiscriminate sexual activity, "[A]n estimated two-thirds of all cases of sexually transmitted disease occur in persons younger than age 25, and every year more than 3 million teenagers are affected."

Teenage pregnancy is probably the best-known consequence of youthful sexual activity. After years of seeing the rate skyrocket, the news has been much better in the last decade or so. Significantly, this news coincides with an increase in abstinence sex education. After it reached an all-time high in 1991, the rate began to fall. By 2000, the pregnancy rate for girls aged 15-19 had fallen 22 percent.

However, the United States continues to have the highest teenage pregnancy rate of all developed countries.

Further, the CDC reports that of the estimated 1 million teen pregnancies each year, 95 percent are unintended

In 1997, the federally funded National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, or Add Health, was released on the health-related behaviors of youth in grades 7-12. The study revealed that the overall picture of teenage sexual activity is not encouraging.

Nationally, 17 percent of children in the 7th and 8th grades report ever having had intercourse.

For high school students, that rate rises to one in two.

Of the 7th and 8th grade girls who had ever had intercourse, one in nine had been pregnant.

Of the 9th through 12th grade girls who had ever had intercourse, one in six reported having been pregnant.

Other consequences are equally alarming—and deadly. AIDS continues to be one of the 10 leading killers of adults ages 25-34, and according to a study released in July 2001, the rate of teenage girls contracting HIV rose by almost 117 percent between 1994 and 1998.

In addition, an estimated 1.3 million babies still die each year through abortion.

20 percent of U.S. abortions each year are performed on teenage girls.

84 percent of all U.S. abortions are performed on unmarried women.

Although some statistics have improved in recent years, studies show that teens who engage in premarital sex are at high risk to “experience emotional and psychological injuries, subsequent marital difficulties, and involvement in other high-risk behaviors.”

While popular culture is glamorizing sex before marriage outside the schools, many educators are inside teaching students how to engage in sex “safely.” “Safe sex” has been the predominant theme of “comprehensive” sex education curricula since the early 1980s. Dr. Alfred Kinsey popularized the philosophy behind conventional sex education with his controversial reports, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Female* (1953). Kinsey, who declared, “All sex is good sex,” conducted fraudulent studies on human sexuality in the early 1940s and founded the Kinsey Institute to continue and to promote his research. The Sex Information & Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) is the educational arm of the Kinsey Institute and has been the primary source for developing guidelines for sexuality education in U.S. public schools.

SIECUS, Planned Parenthood and other groups routinely spread misinformation about sex and encourage youthful sexual experimentation. Most of them claim to support abstinence, but say it is critical for children to learn to engage in “safe sex.” This includes oral sex, “outercourse” (sex without penetration), mutual masturbation, French kissing, fondling, and sex with a condom. Programs that provide this information are the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the CDC. But there is nothing safe about this sex education.

Finding Safety in Condoms?

In 1993, a gang of middle-class teenage boys called the “Spur Posse” competed with each other in a sexual game for “scores” which reflected the number of young women with whom they had sex. Many of these boys’ scores reached the 50s and 60s. When the “game” was discovered and came under attack, one young man remarked, “They teach us condoms this and condoms that, but they don’t teach us any rules.”

CONDOM FACTS

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Advocates of condom-based, or “comprehensive” sex education curricula, commonly refer to their programs as “abstinence based.” But while giving only a nod to abstinence, the curricula focus on birth control, primarily through condoms. The underlying premise? “It’s best to avoid having sex, but if you

do, here's how." In its effort to "teach teens about sexuality," Planned Parenthood posted a new game on its Web site, "teenwire," where cartoon character "Farmer Tina" gives a tour of the animal petting zoo. When the tour reaches a pen filled with sexually transmitted diseases, she warns that anyone having sex without a condom can catch these diseases.

However, a report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that condoms did not "prevent the transmission of most sexually transmitted diseases." In fact, condoms did not provide universal protection against any of the eight STDs examined (including HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, chancroid, trichomoniasis, genital herpes, and HPV). The report concluded that when used correctly and consistently, condoms could reduce the risk of HIV infection by 85 percent, and the risk of gonorrhea—but only for men. But the report stated there was no evidence that condoms reduced infection with HPV, the most common STD. Despite these alarming facts, conventional sex education curricula continue to hail condoms.

Advocates for Youth, an organization which focuses on adolescent "reproductive health," states, "If these young people have had abstinence-only-until-marriage sexuality education, they will not know how to protect themselves and their partners from STDs and unintended pregnancy. In the end ... abstinence-only-until-marriage programs merely keep them from having safer sexual intercourse."

CONDOM FACTS

An estimated 14% of couples will experience an unintended pregnancy during the first year of "typical" use.

They don't mention, however, that Planned Parenthood makes money when young people purchase its line of condoms. They don't mention the millions of dollars that groups like Planned Parenthood, SIECUS, and the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL) stand to lose due to federal funding of abstinence programs in the states through federal funding under Title V. Before 1996, almost all sex education courses were condom-based. But by 2000, 34 percent of secondary schools used abstinence programs. And in 2002, President George W. Bush proposed a \$33 million increase in abstinence education. State health officials are realizing that conventional sex education programs do not work.

In order to receive federal money, abstinence programs must teach that sexual activity in "the context of marriage" is the standard, and that children are to be warned about the harmful "psychological and physical effects" of sex outside of marriage. Federal law also requires that any organization receiving Title V program funds must tell the truth about HPV and condoms. This threatens the federal money that groups like Planned Parenthood and SIECUS receive each year to promote their agenda in schools.

The Cost of Illegitimacy

What became big business for groups favoring conventional sex education also became a tremendous burden for taxpayers. When the 1960s sexual revolution ushered in "free love," premarital sex suddenly

became acceptable—even fashionable—for both teens and adults. Marriage became unnecessary, and children a liability. Sex became a cheap commodity without love or responsibility.

Not surprisingly, “between 1960 and 1999, the percentage [of out-of-wedlock teenage births] increased more than 430 percent.” Because babies born to teens more often suffer from low birth weight due to poor prenatal care, they require costly medical attention—often financed by tax dollars. From 1985-1990, the federal government spent \$120 billion on teenage childbearing; an estimated \$48 billion would have been saved if each birth had been delayed until the mother was more than 20 years old.

The rise in teenage pregnancy and illegitimacy has contributed to an unprecedented breakdown of the family, the building block of a healthy society. Mothers head 84 percent of all single-parent families in the United States. Further, about 40 percent of children who live in these homes have not seen their father in at least one year. Many of these fathers have abandoned their financial responsibility, leaving largely uneducated, unskilled women dependent upon the welfare system. In 1998, the median family income for two-parent families was more than four times that of families in which the mother never married.

Ratio of Out-of- Wedlock Births

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Sadly, studies show that children born out-of-wedlock are more likely to repeat the cycle. In fact, daughters of single parents are “164 percent more likely to have a premarital birth of their own, 111 percent more likely to give birth as teenagers, and 92 percent more likely to divorce than daughters of married parents.”

However, these are not the only societal costs. According to Dr. Alvin Poussaint, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, “when teenagers have babies, both mothers and children tend to have problems—health, social, psychological and economic. Teens who have children out-of-wedlock are more likely to end up at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. ... These numbers have enormous economic implications for the country—and for the rearing of children in America.”

In 1996, Congress took the first step in changing the system, in order to get welfare recipients off the federal payroll and into jobs. According to a recent conference, “The New World of Welfare,” caseloads have dropped by half, and poverty has declined. Still, as former National Fatherhood Initiative President Wade Horn and Urban Institute scholar Isabel Sawhill have noted, “By focusing so heavily on moving mothers into the workforce, states have neglected to work on the equally important task of increasing the number of two-parent families.” Welfare laws must indeed promote work and healthy marriages as well.

“I used to complain to my mother, who is a liberal, about how boyfriends seemed commitment shy. And she would say, ‘Well, why buy the cow if the milk is free?’ We’re in the sexual promised land now, the milk is free, people are surfeited with sex—and yet we’re starved for love.”

— Jennifer Grossman, 30, single, MSNBC-TV contributor

Failure of “Trial Marriage”

As the sexual revolution gained cultural popularity throughout the 1960s and 1970s, couples began living together as a kind of “trial marriage.” They thought if they could try marriage out before actually taking the vows, they could better determine their compatibility and so decrease the possibility of divorce. Cohabiting couples grew almost tenfold, from about 439,000 in 1960 to 4.24 million in 1998. However, of those couples who choose to live together, only one in six will stay together three years, and only one in ten will last ten years or more. Most cohabitating couples, in fact, will last a mere 18 months.

People are not like cars that can be test-driven. And “trial marriage,” by definition, lacks commitment to resolving conflicts and loving another person in sickness or health and for richer or poorer. Commitment is defined as “a pledge to do something.” Marriage is, of course, founded upon that commitment. Thus, the term “trial marriage” is an oxymoron, and statistics bear this out.

According to a Justice Department study of domestic violence against women between 1979 and 1987, husbands account for only a small percentage of abusers. On the contrary, boyfriends, ex-boyfriends and ex-spouses account for almost 65 percent of all domestic violence against women, as compared with 9 percent for husbands. It has also been documented that unmarried pregnant women are three to four times more likely to be assaulted by their boyfriends than are married women by their husbands.

The same is true about destructive patterns of substance abuse. Studies have shown that unmarried men and women are less likely to curb their use of cocaine and cigarettes. However, there is greater incentive in marriage, with reports of people forgoing harmful addictions in order to please a mate and preserve a marriage.

As Harvard sociologist Christopher Jencks said about adult pre-marital sex, “[It] may ultimately prove to be a little like smoking dope in the 1960s. In retrospect, maybe it isn’t so good for you after all.” “Trial marriage” certainly has not been the blessing that everybody expected, not for the men and women involved nor for the children born into these quasi-families.

You need to know that your sexual choices will have real and lasting consequences. You need to know that if you choose to become sexually active, they have a one in four chance of contracting an STD by the age of 21. They also need to know that one-fifth of all AIDS cases in the United States are caused by HIV infections contracted during the teenage years. But most often don’t hear this message in condom-based sex education programs.

We need to restore the truth about marriage. Marriage is intended to be enjoyable rather than difficult and that it does not involve either undue responsibility or unwarranted sacrifice of personal freedom

and happiness.” It is also important that we learn that married sex satisfies the most—physically, mentally and emotionally.

Marital sex studies by Redbook, the popular women’s magazine, and Family Life Seminars found that not only did married couples enjoy sex the most, but that religious people in particular had the highest sexual satisfaction of any other group in terms of the pleasure. There is simply no match for the level of love, commitment and tenderness expressed in the marital sexual relationship.

For those who have already engaged in premarital sex, it must be stressed that it is never too late to postpone future sexual activity. Abstinence until marriage is the most effective means of protecting oneself from disease, infertility, and early death from AIDS, cervical cancer, ectopic pregnancy and abortion. In addition, it decreases the emotional baggage in the future marital relationship. The maxim, “You have sex with every other person your partner has ever had sex with,” could also be applied to relationships in general. Every sexual encounter represents a piece of one’s heart that has been given—often thrown—away, and a part of another person that will remain to burden future relationships. Committing oneself to a second virginity is not easy in this sex-saturated culture. But it will free our nation’s singles to pursue their own goals and dreams and better prepare them for the ultimate love experience—marriage.

Abstinence for America

Abstinence training works—even in the inner city, according to a 1996 study published by Family Planning Perspectives. This merely reiterates what advocates of abstinence education programs knew all along: Abstinence is the only way to go.

Many studies are now being conducted and compiled to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of abstinence-based sex education. But the early conclusions widely show that abstinence education works. For instance, one review noted that the growth of abstinence education coincides with the reduced rates of youth sexual behavior. An evaluation of the abstinence program Operation Keepsake, in Cleveland, Ohio, revealed that the program reduced the rate of onset of sexual activity of 12—and 13-year-olds by two-thirds and reduced the rate of current sexual activity by roughly one-fifth.

In Atlanta, Georgia, the abstinence program, Postponing Sexual Involvement (PSI), was geared to low-income 8th-grade students. A study published in Family Planning Perspectives showed the program’s success: When compared with low-income minority students who did not participate, PSI reduced the rate of onset of sexual activity by 60 percent for boys and more than 95 percent for girls.

At least eight other studies and evaluations of abstinence education programs also reveal their substantial success rates. Educating state legislators and local school boards about the successes will encourage them to adopt abstinence education curricula.

There is a reason society traditionally has channeled sexual activity into marriage. Unbridled sexual activity wreaks havoc. This is not just an issue of morality, but a matter of public health. The problems that have become so entrenched in our country, such as AIDS, illegitimate births, poverty, increasing

crime and the breakdown of the nuclear family, can all be attributed to the debilitating effects of public policy and a culture that condones sex without love or responsibility.

Summary

As research clearly indicates, America is not suffering from a lack of knowledge about sex, but an absence of virtue. Traditional values like love, commitment, responsibility, integrity and self-control are still relevant today and must be taught.

The greatest threat to America's security is not foreign invasion, but destruction from within. As Samuel Adams, the "Father of the American Revolution," once said, "A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely overthrow the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy. While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when they lose their virtue they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader. ... If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved. This will be Our great security."