

Abstinence

There are a lot of girls in my class who have boyfriends. A lot of them tell me that they've already "done it" with their boyfriend. I'm not ready yet, but my boyfriend and I are getting pretty serious. How can you know when it's the right time?

Our culture constantly tells us that sex in any romantic relationship is considered normal and is expected. Whether it's an advertisement for toothpaste, a song on the radio, a sitcom on TV, or an unwanted e-mail in your inbox – we can't escape the message that sex is "ok." It sounds like you're surrounded by friends who are giving you the same message. Sadly for many, sex has become more of a game or hobby than an expression of devotion or love. But it's a game that could cost their lives.

Despite efforts to promote "safe sex," sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) continue to increase. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, one in four people contract an STD, and two-thirds of all sexually transmitted diseases occur in young people. Imagine... one out of every four of your sexually active friends will most likely get an STD. For many, there are no cures. Since the "safe sex" message has been promoted, teenage pregnancies and STD's have increased rather than decreased. Why? Because there is no such thing as "safe sex," except in the context of a committed marriage. I am a mom who conceived a child even when using a condom. My son, Tate, is living proof that condoms aren't reliable. Think about it... if a woman can get pregnant when using a condom, what makes us think that it will prevent us from getting a disease like AIDS, especially when the HIV virus is 500 times smaller than a single sperm? It doesn't take a math expert to figure out the risk. Condoms do not guarantee safe sex.

Even more devastating is the emotional damage premarital sex can inflict. Research indicates that couples who have sex or live together before marriage have a 50 percent higher divorce rate than those who don't. These couples also have higher rates of domestic violence and are more likely to be involved in sexual affairs. People who have sex outside of marriage usually don't wind up marrying each other. Premarital sex leads to emotional distress, distrust, regret, and emptiness. That's because sex isn't just a physical act, but an emotional and spiritual act as well. Premarital sex always comes with consequences. Don't buy into the lie that premarital sex doesn't have long term consequences that you'll regret. It's more than pleasure for a moment. It can cause regret for a lifetime.

Simply put – sex is a gift. Suppose when you were little you were allowed to open your gifts before Christmas. The joy of opening gifts on Christmas would be void because the anticipation of not knowing what was wrapped up in that pretty box was gone. There is something exciting about the wrapped up packages and the mystery of what's inside, not to mention the sheer torture of waiting. Isn't it the same with sex? Wouldn't it be better to "unwrap" your bride from her wedding gown or your husband from his tuxedo on your wedding night with all the anticipation and mystery because it's your first time? To have the security that this man loves you for who you are rather than how you perform; to wear white as a symbol of purity and innocence and have it be true. Nobody forgets their first time. When could it be more romantic than on your wedding night? It's well worth the wait.

There are probably some of you reading this who have already made mistakes and wish you could return to your purity. Sadly, many seem to throw their hands up in defeat and say, "Well, it's too late now. I might as well keep going." But if you were traveling to your friend's house and you took a wrong turn and were headed towards a cliff instead, you wouldn't say to yourself, "Well, I'm on this road now so I might as well keep going." A wise person would turn the car around and get back in the right direction. Granted, you may arrive a little later than you thought with some unexpected bumps and bruises, but your decision to turn around and make it to your destination would be the obvious and intelligent thing to do. I believe each of us holds the ability to withstand the pressures and I hope you will stand firm for what you know is right.

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.