

# Reasons to Wait

When the discussion of chastity and abstinence comes up, it is generally not enough to simply say wait until you are married. People have a need to know why they should wait. Most people are not totally opposed to the idea of abstinence, they just have just never been presented with reasons that are meaningful to them. Christians will default to God and to the Bible to demonstrate that a person should wait until they are married before they become sexually active, and for some this is sufficient. For many this raises more questions than it answers since they will also question the validity and authority of the bible. Are there good reasons to wait that are confirmed outside of religious tradition? Often those who question religious tradition suggest that science is a much more valid authority. We then have to ask the question, does science have anything to say about this topic? There are three reasons that we will look at to answer the question, why wait. Two of them are fairly obvious and relatively well known; however the other is not as obvious.

## **Pregnancy**

The first and most obvious reason to not have sex before marriage is to avoid pregnancy. From a purely biological perspective the natural purposes of sex are to be procreative and unitive. To ensure that the natural procreative aspect of the action does

not happen people turn to unnatural artificial means of contraception. Sexual intimacy is unitive because it binds the couple together to create a strong family unit for the nurturing of children. Pregnancy is often the greatest fear that teens have when sexually active. In an attempt to avoid pregnancy they turn to artificial contraception. If the contraceptive doesn't work they turn to abortion.

In the 1990's Albertans rejoiced that the rate of teens giving birth had dropped dramatically. It was thought that the 'safe sex' message was really working. What they failed to notice was the rise in teen abortions. The teens weren't getting pregnant less; they were simply carrying their babies to term less. In Alberta, on an annual basis, we have more than 11,000 abortions. Most abortions are had by women between the ages of 15 and 25, and about 1% of all abortions are had because the woman had been raped.

Children deserve to be brought up in a loving two-parent family. By having sex outside of marriage we are ultimately saying that the potential child does not have this right, and that the rights of the man and women to enjoy themselves sexually surpasses the rights of the child.

## **Sexually Transmitted Diseases**

The second reason to wait is to avoid the transmission of STD's (also known in politically correct circles as

sexually transmitted infections or STI's). Naturally, people are concerned about getting a disease. The problem is that most people have no idea how the diseases are transmitted, how serious they can be, and what the potential consequences of might be. At one point our society pushed the 'safe sex' message, however when it was realized that people were following this message and still getting pregnant and getting STD's they changed the message to 'safer sex'. Suggesting that if a person were to follow this message they would still be at risk, but the risk would not be as great.

There are several problems with this 'safer sex' message. When young people hear it whether it is referred to as only being 'safer' they still hear that they shouldn't be having sex, but if they are going to they need to be safe and wear a condom. What does this do? It still leaves young people (and old people) thinking that a piece of latex is going to protect from any possible negative effects of sex.

There are two categories of STD's, bacterial and viral. Bacterial STD's are curable. If a person gets a bacterial STD they simply have to take antibiotics for a period of time and they are back to new. The problem is that with some STD's, there are no symptoms and a person won't know that they have them until it is too late. For instance, Chlamydia is bacterial infection. It can be painful and annoying for a man but easily treatable. For a woman there are often no obvious symptoms. The bacteria

will work its way up into a woman's reproductive tract and cause scarring of the fallopian tubes often leaving the woman unable to have children. The disease can be treated and gotten rid of, however the damage that the bacteria does before treatment is irreversible. The woman could pass Chlamydia on to other partners without ever knowing that she was infected. Generally when one person comes in to receive treatment for an STD the doctor will require that the person names other partners that may also have been infected.

Viral STD's can be just as damaging but are far more serious in that they are incurable. Once a person has a viral STD, they have it for life and will pass it on to their future partners. Viral STD's include HIV/AIDS, Genital Warts (HPV), and Herpes. These diseases as well can be transferred from one person to the next without the infected person ever knowing he or she has been infected. And just because there are no obvious sores or warts one cannot assume that the person is a safe partner. Genital Warts (HPV) cause more deaths among women than AIDS as it is the leading cause of cervical cancer.

These diseases are transferred through one of two methods: transfer of bodily fluids or skin-to-skin contact. Condoms can to some extent prevent the transfer of bodily fluids thus lowering the risk of contracting diseases that are transferred this way. The failure rate of condoms to prevent pregnancy *amongst teens* is near 20%.

It is also thought that this number is likely higher since it doesn't include girls who have had abortions. If the condom fails to prevent pregnancy 20% of the time this means that about 20% of the time bodily fluids are getting through. Which means the disease is getting through also. One then needs ask themselves what level of risk are they willing to take?

The condom has little or no hope of protecting people from diseases that are transferred through skin-to-skin contact. Contact anywhere in the genital area is sufficient to transfer the disease from one person to the next. Diseases such as genital warts and herpes are transferred this way. Although these diseases are called *sexually* transmitted diseases, one does not need to actually have intercourse to become infected. Any skin-to-skin contact is sufficient. These diseases can also be transferred through oral sex as well. One can get genital warts in the throat.

Sexually transmitted diseases do not care how many partners you have had, what your income is, or where you live. They are not diseases that only the promiscuous have to worry about. Their chance of getting a disease increases with the number of partners they have, but that does not mean that a person who has only ever been with one other person one time won't be infected.

### **Cohabitation Effect**

The next reason to wait until marriage to be sexually active is one that is not as obvious as the others.

Psychologists and Marriage and Family Counselors have written about the phenomenon known as the Cohabitation Effect. The Cohabitation Effect looks at the issue of couples who are sexually active and living with their spouse before marriage.

It is common in our society for people to live together before they get married. Of the many reasons they give for doing so, one of the most popular reasons for living together is to find whether or not they are compatible. On the surface this would seem to make a lot of sense. If a couple wants to know what it would be like to be married to one another, what better way could there be than to have trial marriage. If they decide that they are not compatible then they would be free to move out and move on to another potential candidate. We do this with other aspects of our lives. When we buy a car, we wouldn't simply say that it is a nice color and write a check for it; we would test drive it. You wouldn't want to be stuck with a car that you don't like.

Based on the logic of this argument one would assume that those who have lived together before marriage should have happy long lasting, fulfilling marriages. These couples should have a high rate of marital happiness and a very low divorce rate. On the other hand, those who didn't live together before marriage, at least based on the logic of this argument, should have much lower rates of marital happiness and much higher divorce rates. What

Marriage and Family Counselors and Psychologists have found is that the exact opposite is true. Those who lived together and were sexually active (realistically there aren't many who could live together and not be involved sexually) before they get married have a lower rate of marital happiness and high rate of divorce where as those who did not live together and weren't sexually active before they got married had a much lower divorce rate and a higher rate of marital happiness.

Why is this the case? Why is it that those who live together and are sexually active before marriage statistically have such problems after they get married? When a couple get married it is essential that they really take the time to get to know one another. They need to know each other on a deeply intimate level. The choice of partner needs to be made with the soberest possible judgment. Those who are not sexually involved seem to be able to achieve this where those who are sexually involved are not as able to do this.

It is true that sexual intimacy is a beautiful sacred experience when shared between a man and a woman who are committed to one another. However there is a very definite neurophysiological aspect to the act. This means that a person's body responds in a certain way. Interestingly, the response of the body during sexual intimacy is virtually identical to the response of the body during a drug induced high. Dopamine is released in the brain triggering the

reward mechanism causing a euphoric high that is later sought after. Just as a person who uses drugs will chase the high that they originally experienced, so to will those who are sexually active.

Studies have shown that the brain's response while a person does heroin is virtually identical to that of a person who is experiencing sexual pleasure. It is the brain's response, the high, that the heroin addict then chases and tries to achieve over and over again. It then is reasonable to conclude that the person experiencing this high during sexual intimacy would also try to achieve it over and over again.

Magazines such as Glamour and Cosmopolitan demonstrate the public's desire for information about how to achieve greater highs. A recent cover of Cosmopolitan listed an article called the 'Ultimate Orgasm'. Each month these magazines and several others, on their covers, advertise new and improved ways to achieve this euphoria. When a couple is involved sexually it is easy for their desires to a focus almost exclusively on achieving the greatest high.

We all know people who are addicted to drugs. It is unreasonable to expect that they are going to make good decisions in their lives on small issues, and it is even less likely that they are going to make good decisions in their lives on big issues. As well it is unlikely that they are going to be capable of making good character judgments about the person who is

their dealer, the one who supplies them with the necessities to achieve their high.

Relationships are not significantly different. When a couple is sexually intimate it is easy to overlook certain negative characteristics about their partner. It can get to the point where it is difficult to know for sure whether the couple is together because they really, truly love each other or if it is because one is the other's source of pleasure.

Those who are sexually intimate before marriage think they are "test driving the car before they buy it" in an attempt to determine compatibility. When in actual fact they are trying to make an important life altering decision in this quasi drug induced stupor. It is not a surprise that many of these relationships end in divorce.

Those who are not sexually intimate before marriage are able to take the time to get to know each other on a much more intimate level. They are able to make the decision on a spouse in a much more sober state of

mind. They know that truly love each other for who they are and not just their ability to satisfy them sexually. They are by far more able to choose the perfect person for themselves. When they get married and enter into a sexual relationship they in a sense become addicted to the person that is perfect for them. This is why these relationships do not end in divorce nearly as often as those who are sexually intimate before marriage.

This isn't to say that just because a couple is sexually intimate before they get married that they are doomed to a life misery and divorce. What it does mean is that there are many who have gone down this road only to have their relationships end tragically in divorce. It would seem that if we really want our marriages to be happy fulfilling and long-lasting that we should look to those who have had happy long-lasting marriages and model what they have done. This means following what science has been telling us for the last few years and following what the Church has been telling us for the last 2000 years.



## Reasons to Wait

1. What are the three reasons given to wait until marriage before one becomes sexually intimate with another?
2. What are the two natural purposes of sexual intimacy?
3. What caused Albertans to rejoice in the 1990's? Why was this excitement not really deserved?
4. How many abortions take place annually in Alberta? What percentage of these abortions is because of rape?
5. What are the two categories of STDs and are they curable?
6. What is wrong with the 'safe sex' message?
7. What is the danger for a woman if Chlamydia is left untreated? Can this be reversed? Explain
8. Can a person pass on an STD without either knowing that they have one or showing signs that they have one? Is it then possible to know for sure that a person who has been sexually active and hasn't been tested does not have an STD?

9. What are the two ways STD's transferred from one person to the next? How effective is the condom at protecting a person from either possibility?
10. Does a person need to have sexual intercourse to get an STD? Are other possible ways they can be transmitted?
  
11. Who is at risk of contracting an STD?
  
12. What is one of the most popular reasons people give for living together before marriage? Explain how on the surface this seems to make sense. Based on this logic what should we expect from couples who don't live together before marriage?
  
13. What have Marriage and Family Counselors found regarding the 'test driving' of one's potential mate?
  
14. What is the body's response during sexual intimacy similar to? Explain.
  
15. How does sexual intimacy outside of marriage cloud one's judgment when choosing a mate?
  
16. How does science confirm the teachings of the Church?