

# Abstinence: What, Why, How?

According to statistics from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 48% of high school students have had sexual intercourse. Furthermore, a 1994 study run by a University of Chicago professor indicated that only 7% of men and 21% of women were still virgins on their wedding night. These are alarming statistics that indicate a terrible problem in our country. It also makes me aware that many of the unmarried people listening to this lesson have already had sex or will be seriously tempted to do so in the future. A spirit-led and enabled commitment to abstinence, the practice of abstaining from sex outside of marriage, is the solution. Before we talk about abstinence, let's first discuss what the Scriptures teach about sex.

## A Biblical view of Sex

**God created men and women and designed sex to be the means of reproduction**

**Genesis 1:27-28** – “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply...”

**God told Adam to cleave to Eve and become “one flesh” with her**

**Genesis 2:24** – “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

**God has declared that sex outside of marriage is sin.**

**Ephesians 5:3** – “But fornication (premarital sex), and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;”

**There shouldn't be a question in people's minds about the purity of your relationship!**

## Why is sex before marriage bad?

**Proverbs 9:17-18** – “Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.”

My burden in this lesson is not just to tell you that premarital sex is wrong, but to show you why God gave us this commandment. 1 John 5:3 teaches us that God's commandments are not grievous or burdensome. They always have a purpose. Why does God want to prevent us from having sex outside of marriage? Let's look at a series of passages from 1 Corinthians 6.

**Sexual sin brings destruction**

**1 Corinthians 6:12(a)** – “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient (good for me)”

- Guilt – over 60% of college students involved in premarital sex said it produced tremendous guilt.
- Emotional Distress – sex is emotionally binding and is destructive when misused  
*“The truth is that wherever a man lies with a woman, there, whether they like it or not, a transcendental relationship is set up between them which much be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured, “ - C.S. Lewis in The Screwtape Letters*
- Broken Relationships – 50% of males and 26% of females said they broke up because of sex.
- Self-Hatred – low self esteem is often one of the reasons people give in. Having sex doesn't help.
- Brings problems to a future marriage
  - Those who have premarital sex tend to have less happy marriages. **The physical relationship is an inadequate foundation upon which to build a lasting relationship.**
  - A study by the National Center for Health Statistics and the University of Maryland showed that those who are sexually active before marriage are 71% more likely to divorce than those who are virgins on their wedding night. Also, marriages that started out as cohabitating unions (living together) have a 50% higher divorce rate than those that did not.

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- Persons and couples who have had premarital sex are more likely to have extramarital affairs.
- Having premarital sex may fool you into marrying a person who is not right for you.
- Couples that are sexually active before marriage often experience frigidity (lack of desire to have sex) later in marriage.
- Abortion – One of the greatest tragedies of premarital sex: infants murdered to cover the parent's sin
- Spiritual Devastation – sin always hurts your relationship with God and can leave you feeling cold and distant from Him

## Sexual sin can **control** you

**1 Corinthians 6:12(b)** – “all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

- Sexual Addiction – 44% of males and 26% of females said it produced “an intense desire for more”
- Unplanned Pregnancies – children will alter your life prematurely
- Downward spiral – disobeying God in this area makes it easier to disobey Him in other areas

## Sexual sin is a **perversion** of God's purpose for our bodies

**1 Corinthians 6:15-18** – “(a) Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. (b) Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.”

### (a) If you are saved, you take God with you into every sin!

- You use God's property in a way that is totally contrary to God's purposes.

- It taints His reputation. - Do you know those who claim to be Christians and are having sex?

### (b) Sexual sin is unique because it is a sin against your body

*“...although sexual sin is not necessarily the worst sin, it is the most unique in its character. It rises from within the body bent on personal gratification. It drives like no other impulse and when fulfilled affects the body like no other sin. It has a way of internally destroying a person that no other sin has. Because sexual intimacy is the deepest uniting of two persons, its misuse corrupts on the deepest human level.”* – John MacArthur in The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1 Corinthians: 151

## Remember, you can't play with **fire** without getting **burned**

**Proverbs 6:27-28** - “Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?”

## How far is too far?

Obviously, having premarital sex is wrong. Just how far does God allow us to go before marriage? The following passage provides the direction we need.

**Galatians 5:19** - “Now, the results of living in the flesh are well-known, which are these; Adultery, having sex before marriage, mental lusting, inappropriate sexual interaction (going too far)...” – *My translation*

- **Control your **thoughts** about the opposite sex.**

**Matthew 5:28** – “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

# Abstinence: What, Why, How?

- Keep your **clothes** on.
- Abstain from **inappropriate** physical contact.  
A woman in Old Testament times was to have her hand cut off for touching a man inappropriately
- Abstain from any other **behavior** that can lead to the violation of the above principles.  
Discuss kissing, hugging, holding hands, making out
- Do not violate your **conscience**

## How can I resist temptation?

**1 Corinthians 10:13** – “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it].”

**1 Thessalonians 4:3-4** – “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;”

Temptation will come. It isn't a sin to be tempted; but it is a sin to give in. God desires that you know how to remain pure and chaste in your relationships. He always makes a way of escape. Here are some of the principles He teaches us in His Word.

### Pray that you might not be **tempted**

**Matthew 26:41** – “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed [is] willing, but the flesh [is] weak.”

- Seek spiritual help from on high. Good intentions need Divine intervention to become good actions.

### **Avoid** all sources of temptation

**Ephesians 4:27** – “Neither give place to the devil.”

**1 Thessalonians 5:22** – “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

- Don't allow yourselves to be alone in a situation where you are tempted to go too far.
- Avoid a prolonged engagement if the Lord is in the relationship.

### **Flee** from temptation

**Genesis 39:1-12** – Joseph and Potiphar's wife

- When you look temptation in the eye, turn and run the other way!

### Surround yourselves with others of a **like-mind**

**2 Timothy 2:22** – “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

- Your girlfriend or boyfriend should have the same values and boundaries that you do!  
I recommend that you avoid getting serious with someone who is not a Christian.
- You should have one or more Christian friends that you can hold you accountable.

## Handling Some of the Hard Questions

### God gave us the desire for sex and the ability to have sex, so it must be okay

**1 Corinthians 6:13** – “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.”

Just because God gave you the ability to do something, that doesn't mean that He wants you to do it.

# Abstinence: What, Why, How?

**How can we know we are really meant for each other unless we have sex?**

The ability to have intercourse exists between any male and female. It isn't dependent upon "finding the right one". If you desire to be married and make the commitment to each other, the rest will work out to amazing satisfaction within a loving, committed, attentive, and monogamous marriage relationship.

**I owe it to him/her.**

**1 Corinthians 6:20** – "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

*Illus:* Man that offers her \$1 million for sex and then offers her \$10

Christ is the One to whom you owe it all! He instructs you to refrain until marriage!

**We are in love; so it is okay. or We are engaged so it is okay**

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8(a)** – "Charity suffereth long, [and] is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth."

It sounds like you aren't in love; you are in lust! True love will wait for the blessing of God!

God does not excuse current sin based on future promises. *Illus:* Stealing money that you will pay back

**I've already messed up. Is there any hope for me?**

**YES!** There is hope, forgiveness, and peace available to you through Jesus Christ. Even though your sins are as scarlet, you can be white as snow. (Isaiah 1:18) God alone can heal the destruction that has already begun in your life. I would encourage you to consider the following three steps that can bring restoration.

**Step #1 – Go to God**

**Matthew 11:28-30** – "Come unto me, all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke [is] easy, and my burden is light."

- Above all others, it is God that you have sinned against. He offers forgiveness to those who repent.  
*Our God is a God of second chances!*

**Step #2 – Enlist the help of your Parents and/or your Pastor**

God has placed these people in your life for a purpose. You may feel that they won't understand, but you will need their support, love, forgiveness, and encouragement to help you through the times ahead of you.

**Step #3 – Revise the relationship if you are still in it**

- If they are repentant - *pray about whether the relationship should continue and set mutually agreed upon boundaries*
- If they are not repentant - *Break off the relationship, at least at a boyfriend / girlfriend level.*

**Final Thoughts**

**1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 7-8** – "For this is the will of God, [even] your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit."

**Will you obey God's instructions or will you reject Him?**