

## Introduction

- A. Did you happen to catch this headline two weeks ago: "Health Study: Teaching Abstinence Works Better Than Sex Ed"?
  - 1. I happened to stumble across it in the news area of AOL while checking my email. I don't know how much play this story got in the media. I didn't hear much about it. But for educators concerned with sex education in the public schools, the results were stunning. Some background may help here.
  - 2. For several years there has been an intense debate over how sex education will be taught in the public schools. One group believes that teenagers will be sexually immoral, there is nothing that can be done about it, and that people just have to accept this and teach kids how to avoid disease or pregnancy. On the other side there have been a smaller number of voices suggesting that kids ought to be taught to live pure lives. They have been urging that abstinence be taught in sex education classes. In some places, this has been done.
  - 3. However, it has been done over the objections and ridicule of many in our culture. There are a lot of people who think it is pretty dumb to try to teach young people to live pure lives and to abstain from sexual sin. They mock the very notion.
  - 4. And then there was this study, conducted by a team from the University of Pennsylvania and published in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine that made this amazing discovery. When kids were encouraged as part of their "sex education" to consider the long term consequences of their decision and challenged to abstain from sex altogether, guess what they found? Over the next several years fewer of these kids were sexually immoral. Imagine that! What an astonishing finding! (sarcasm intended).
- B. My desire is not to inform you about what has been in the news recently.
  - 1. In fact, I would urge you not to be too concerned with what the scientific studies say. Count on the fact that in a few years there will be another study and it might reach the opposite conclusion.
  - 2. Disciples of Jesus don't set their moral compass based on scientific studies and surveys of public opinion. It is God who guides everything we do. We decide what is right and wrong, and what to teach our kids, based on what He says in His word.
  - 3. Which raises an interesting question: What would God say about all of this? What would He want us to say to young people about sex during the teen years, before marriage?
  - 4. This is an important question about which we want to make a few comments.

## God requires abstinence.

- A. People in our culture may struggle with this issue.
  - 1. They may wrestle with what to say to kids about sex before marriage. They may even wrestle with what is right and wrong when it comes to sexual purity.
  - 2. But there is no doubt about God's will.
    - a. I Thessalonians 4:3-8. It is God's will that we abstain from sexual sin. When we reject this instruction, we are rejecting God.
    - b. Colossians 3:5-8a. As a follower of Jesus, I am dead to sexual immorality. I take control of these evil desires and refuse to indulge them.
    - c. Ephesians 5:1-3. This sinful behavior is not to be named among God's people.
- B. In fact, the Bible goes further than this. It does not merely condemn the act of fornication, it condemns the evil conduct that leads up to it.
  - 1. Paul had this in mind when he condemned impurity (Galatians 5:19).
  - 2. Jesus spoke plainly on this issue (Matthew 5:27-28).
  - 3. It's not just fornication that is condemned; it is the evil motives, words and actions that scripture condemns as well.
- C. Sexual intimacy is reserved for couples within the committed bond of marriage (Proverbs 5:15-20).
  - 1. Disciples are to respect this boundary God has set (Hebrews 13:4). If you are not married, you must abstain from sexual intimacy. If we are married, we must abstain from sexual intimacy with anyone except our spouse.
  - 2. No matter what decision the "experts" in our culture may reach, God requires abstinence. This is what we must teach our young people. It's what we all need to practice. And for a good reason...

## God's laws protect us.

- A. We need to remember that every command from God is rooted in His love.
  - 1. To be specific, God does not tell us to be sexually pure because He is trying to make our lives more difficult.
  - 2. Just the opposite is true. He demands that we be pure so that we will avoid the grief that comes with sexual sin.
  - 3. The choice to have sex before marriage, or with someone else after marriage, can come with a truck load of trouble. King David learned the lesson the hard way (II Samuel 11-12). One foolish night of indulging temptation brought grief into his world he never could have imagined (Psalm 51:1-4). Do you hear his grief? Perhaps this is in part what provoked Solomon to give this warning (Proverbs 6:25-33).
- B. One of the articles I read about this abstinence program that had proven effective described one of the assignments kids would be given.
  - 1. They were required to write down the pros and cons of choosing to be sexually active.
  - 2. It made kids really stop and think about the price they might pay for the moment of passion.

- a. Pregnancy – 3000 adolescent girls get pregnant every day. If there is a pregnancy, it changes your life.
  - 1) Two thirds of teen moms never complete high school.
  - 2) 80% live below the poverty line for the next decade.
  - 3) More than half stay there for the rest of their lives.
  - 4) The children are impacted. They are more likely to be in poor health and struggle through life. The boys are more likely to end up in prison and the girls more likely to be unwed moms – and continue the cycle.
- b. Disease – 12,000 kids contract an STD every day.
- c. Guilt – one girl commented, “I felt like God wasn’t going to forgive me. I asked myself again and again, ‘Why on earth did you do it?’”
3. Do you hear the pain in her voice; the grief, the regret? This is what God is trying to save us from! He loves us and does not want us to experience this grief and heartache.
4. When kids are encouraged to think about the consequences, fewer are willing to take the risk.
5. There is a lesson here for godly parents. We need to be talking to our kids about this. We need to be emphasizing this danger.

## God has confidence in youth.

- A. There is one thing about the current debate over abstinence programs that really makes me angry. It is the way teenagers are demeaned.
  1. Those who oppose teaching kids to abstain begin with this assumption: if you are a teenager, you simply are not able to control yourself. You lack the maturity, character and self-discipline to control your desires.
  2. Every young person ought to be insulted by the suggestion that they are destined to commit fornication and nothing can be done about it.
- B. God has a higher estimation of you than this.
  1. He understood that it would not be easy to live a sexually pure life. When He required abstinence until marriage, He recognized that...
    - a. Our sexual desires would be strong in our youth.
    - b. Some disciples would live in cultures where sex would be talked about all the time.
    - c. Young people would face a lot of pressure to have sex and would be ridiculed for their purity.
  2. But He gave these instructions anyway.
    - a. He gave them because He’s looking out for us.
    - b. He gave them because He knew that, even in youth, we have the ability to reign in our passions, discipline our lives and do the right thing.
    - c. He has confidence in you. For that reason, He also has great expectations too.
    - d. He expects you to do just that – control yourself and follow His laws.

## God holds all accountable.

- A. You may have noticed that many of the passages we read about sexual purity also mentioned the consequences that follow for those who reject God’s law.
  1. I Thessalonians 4:6. Paul warned that God is the avenger – the One who will bring justice to those who live impure lives.
  2. Colossians 3:6. The wrath of God will come upon those who disobey.
  3. Hebrews 13:4. Fornicators and adulterers will be judged by God.
- B. Let’s get firmly planted in our minds what we are discussing.
  1. Sexual purity is not an issue of judgment for each of us to decide for ourselves. Sexual sin is not youthful indiscretion to be lightly dismissed.
  2. God demands sexual purity from His people. To disobey this command is sin. To persist in this path will cause us to be lost in the end.
  3. God has a standard. Men may ignore it or ridicule it, but His standard remains unchanged. One day all will give an account to that standard. To be plain, if we live sexually immoral lives, we will lose our souls.
  4. We need to take that to heart. We need to teach it to our kids.

## Conclusion: Are you ready to give account for your life?

II Corinthians 5:10. There is a day coming when all men will have to face God’s standard and give an account for the lives they have lived. Are you ready for that day to come?

- David A. Banning