



Notes For Life

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How ironic that today's women, fueled by the radical feminism of the sixties that told them they could be "just like men" and were entitled to this "empowering sexual freedom," have been reduced to ubiquitous sex objects co-existing with men who have been conditioned to believe that there is no pay-off for them to be honorable in their actions towards these young women who will someday become their wives and mothers to their children.

— Ed Szeto

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It's not about the birds and the bees anymore:

How to talk with your kids about sex when they think you're clueless

By Maggie Kerner, Director, LCMS Life and Health Ministries

You know you should. You know you ought to. You know you keep putting it off. However, when it comes to discussing sexuality with their children, most parents — myself included — find it uncomfortable and daunting. After all, for years, we've tried to be modest with our kids and they find it unbelievable that married people, their parents, actually have sex!

A recent study found that about nine out of 10 adults surveyed said they believe parents should talk to their kids about sex, but often they don't know what to say, how to say it, or when to start.

The teen years are a time of intense transition for parents and their kids. We shouldn't think of this as a time to "let go." Rather it is a time when we need to draw even closer to our teens. Childhood does not magically disappear when a child reaches 15 or 16, nor does his/her need for good Christian parenting. Parents need to help shape their child's life now more than ever.

And despite the fact that TV, MTV, movies and music continually expose our teens to blatant sexual imagery, there is some great new research that can give us discouraged moms and dads some hope. Studies show that parents are — in fact — capable of making a much more dramatic influence in their children's sexual decision-making than we originally thought. Even science is now confirming this concept.

Recent MRI studies of the developing brains of normal adolescents clearly show that the physical development of the pre-frontal cortex is not complete until the mid-20s. This is important because the frontal lobes of each of the cerebral hemispheres of the brain are used for logical reasoning and emotions, and the pre-frontal lobes play a role in higher-level thought processes.

In addition, during fetal life and again during adolescence, there is explosive brain development in our children. During both of these growth periods, more brain synapses develop than are actually needed. Most of the unused synapses will disappear, while the often-used synapses are retained and strengthened — sort of the "use it or lose it" phenomenon. This is really important because it means that the experiences and activities of our adolescents actually mold their brains.

What does this mean for us as parents? It means that we need to reject the former thoughts of psychologists and our culture that promotes the idea that teens are capable of evaluating consequences and making complicated and difficult decisions for themselves.

Our teens are NOT "mini" adults! Society has been giving us the message that,

given enough freedom, teens will be able to employ “cause and effect” thought processes for their decision-making. This new research simply confirms that this is not true — a fact folks a generation ago knew by common sense.

Look at it this way: you wouldn't let your toddler play outside by the busy street without some boundaries or supervision because they simply aren't intellectually — or even physically — equipped to protect themselves. They would end up wandering gleefully after a ball into the busy street. Does your toddler like boundaries? No. Does your toddler need boundaries? Most certainly yes.

This new research tells us that we need to employ a similar strategy during the teen years. These years can be tricky because our teens often look — and sometimes act — like they are physically and emotionally all grown up. My daughter and I wear the same shoe size. Your teen may be memorizing the periodic table of elements and be a charming conversationalist (or not) and be able to serenade us with Bach, or shoot amazing three-pointers. Teens can often do all kinds of amazing and wonderful things we can be so proud of . . . but we need to stop and remember that they are not adults, yet. Just like when they were toddlers, they simply are not intellectually — or even physically — equipped to protect themselves from the many dangers they will encounter.

If given enough freedom, our teens will be just like that little toddler and wander gleefully after a distraction out into the “traffic” . . . the traffic of our culture. A culture filled with hidden and seductive dangers that Satan has specifically designed to target our children.

For most of my adult life the phrase “hooking up” referred to something one did with stereo equipment or cable TV. Ask your adolescent (or anyone at random in your church's youth group) and you'll hear the current definition: a spontaneous, non-conversational, usually emotionless, apparently meaningless and definitely commitment-less physical encounter; typically at a social gathering where alcohol or other intoxicants serve as catalysts. What's equally alarming is that recent studies have also shown that Christian teenagers are just as likely to be sexually active as non-Christians.

Here's a quiz: What is the most common concern parents give about their child having sex outside of marriage? Most parents say pregnancy is their chief worry in regard to their teens. That is a valid concern. In the United States 3,000 teens become pregnant each day. That's a million each year!

But did you know that our teens have a four-times greater chance of contracting a sexually transmitted disease than they have of getting (or of getting someone else) pregnant? And many of those diseases are life-threatening. Each year about 10 million Americans visit a doctor to be treated for a sexually transmitted disease (the actual number of individuals infected each year is estimated at twice that).

There's a new theory that many people (including me) think is contributing to these problems. It seems that our society is experiencing a loss of the “culture of courtship” — the “set of social norms and expectations that once helped young people find the pathway to marriage.” Most teens today have no idea of the type of “dating” that our generation grew up with. You know; the nervous phone call from the guy asking the girl out next Friday. You remember the uncomfortable introduction to the dad when he picks her up at home, to be followed by a movie, popcorn and the decision to go out again — or maybe not. The term “dating” is not even used much these days.

Part of this problem may be because sociologists have seen “the virtual disappearance of adult participation in, or even awareness of, how today's young people find and marry one another. Adults, especially parents, need to take a meaningful role in correcting this loss: Because this is an important step in teaching our children respect and honor of the opposite gender. We want our teens to learn this respect because that is what is found in Christian marriage.

Powerful forces shaping our society (including our public education system, our legislators and the media) teach that it is unreasonable to expect unmarried people to abstain from sexual intercourse. Public schools put a stamp of approval on premarital sex by making condoms and abortion advice freely available to their students. Value-absent, condom-touting “comprehensive” sex education has effectively devalued the meaning of human sexuality among our youth, and subsequently encouraged the hooking-up phenomenon.

In this climate, even the plague of AIDS has been unable to demand support for sexual purity. In place of chastity, the lie of “safe sex” is being promoted. Television programs frequently portray promiscuity as desirable and healthy. Comic books



feature super-heroes who are gay. It has completely abolished the understanding of God's design for our sexuality within the boundaries of marriage between a man and a woman.

As Christians, we need to be honest with ourselves. The blame for our children's disregard for the sixth commandment often lies at our own doorsteps, as well. Ironically, the Institute for American Values study found that 83 percent of the undergraduate women surveyed indicated that "being married is a very important goal" for them. If we as parents want to help our kids fulfill that goal, it is imperative that we step up to the plate and take a stand for sexual sanity and marital integrity.

Properly taught abstinence — or I prefer to call it "chastity" — education, on the other hand, is all about relationship skills and much more: respect for self and others, self-discipline, servant-hood in Christian relationships, understanding the dangers of sex outside of marriage, education about healthy interactions with the opposite sex and, above all, building the foundation for a solid marriage.

Parents need to speak with their children about sexuality. If you find that to be challenging — or a bit scary — you're in good company. Because of its intensely intimate nature, the thought of addressing the topic of sex with our children usually provokes a strong emotional reaction.

But we must not avoid this responsibility. Because we live in a sex-obsessed society, we cannot prevent even our young children from learning about the subject long before they need to. Sex education of children by their parents is a matter of self-defense. Only if we serve as the instructors, can we be sure our children will accurately learn the essential facts together with the appropriate values.

Remember what we discussed earlier about the development of teen brains? Folks, this is one area where they certainly need our guidance and support.

OK, so how do we do it? Well let's begin with three do's and three don'ts.

1. Do — Listen first. A simple rule of communication says you can't communicate well if you don't know your audience. In this discussion, your audience is a unique young personality with hopes and dreams and opinions and questions. We need to make sure he or she feels comfortable talking to us first when questions arise. Create an atmosphere of trust, safety, confidentiality and openness so he or she will "try-out" the questions and opinions on us first.

2. Do — communicate, communicate, communicate, and then repeat. Remember the agonizing talk about the birds and bees our parents gave us — maybe ONCE if we were lucky? Consider this: did you know professional marketers say the average advertisement needs to be seen or heard at least seven times before the message resonates and sticks with the consumer? Think about how many times the message that "sex outside of marriage is OK" is sent to your kids in our modern culture. They are constantly bombarded with that message. Unfortunately, it eventually registers with some kids. Let's make sure that God's plan for our sexuality within marriage is constantly before them as well.

In your conversations with your children, here are some "talking points" to highlight (in your own style) when discussing sex:

- **Sex is a beautiful thing** — a gift God has given us for procreation and for expressing love and servanthood to our spouse.
- **Marriage is a boundary that God gives us for sex.** (Discuss good boundaries such as fences from the street, the ring around a dangerous campfire, etc.)
- **Boundaries are God's way of showing His love for us.** It is for our own good and not to spoil our fun. God is helping us with the confusion and the potential for confusion, heartache and danger and BEFORE it arises, before a life is burdened with the result of poor choices and dumb decisions. Encourage your child to take charge and be the one in control of personal decisions — He can have it all figured out, thought through, and simplified — by just trusting God's plan. Sex within His boundaries is awesome; sex without boundaries can be horribly destructive.



- **Discuss consequences of living outside of God’s marital boundary for sex** — Pregnancy, STDs (physical danger), emotional heartache, and spiritual decay.
- **God did not create sex for the boundary of love.** Sex is reserved for the boundary of commitment — and that means marriage. Because if you are going to open yourself up completely, intimately, physically, emotionally, spiritually . . . you had better know that person isn’t going to walk away. Because marriage not only involves total spiritual and emotional commitment, marriage also involves a legal commitment. Marriage is legally recognized by our society and government for the physical and financial protection of you and of any children conceived in the family.
- **Remind your child that if he’s decided to remain a virgin until his wedding day, he’s made a valuable choice he will never regret.** He’ll be able to say to his future spouse — “I’ve waited for you because we were both worth it.” What an amazing wedding gift, huh?
- **You are made pure and beautiful — a beauty given to you by God . . .** a God who loves you and saved you by sending His Son to rescue you from all your mistakes.
- **Make sure you let your child know that if she herself, or a friend, has already had sex, it’s never too late!** Remind them that at this very moment, everybody has the same choices that everyone else has! Anyone can begin again to build integrity, discipline and peace in your life. This is the joy we have in the Gospel.

3. **Do** — **get medically accurate information and know what is going on in your teen’s world.** To give you a start, there is a list of informative resources on the LCMS Life Library: www.lcms.org/lifelibrary

Those were the Do’s — here are some ‘Don’t’s’:

1. **Don’t — be age inappropriate.** Don’t bore a 4-year-old with information about the female fallopian tube, and don’t think your 16-year-old is interested in fairy tales about the birds and the bees. Know your child well enough to know what she can handle and what her current interests are. For younger children such as preschoolers and early elementary, it is important to reinforce the miracle of their bodies and how they were created. Make sure they know about appropriate and inappropriate touching. Make sure they know they can always come to you for anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. Answer their questions in simple, concrete ways. Use everyday life events and turn them into teachable moments. If you are having another baby, it is a perfect opportunity for special learning opportunities. Allow the child to feel the baby moving, and drag out her baby book and talk about how you anxiously awaited her arrival. Discuss God’s creation in the garden and His formation of Adam and Eve for each other and for Him.

With older elementary children, you can get more detailed and discuss the formation of life in the womb. They will become increasingly more curious about their bodies so you must answer questions truthfully with accurate vocabulary. As they begin to become more aware of their appearance and fashion, it is time to introduce discussions about modesty. If someone on television is wearing something questionable, ask your child for his reaction and use that as a springboard for a discussion about appropriate

Chastity: Resources in print and on the Web

- LCMS Life Ministries Life Library. More than 200 articles on topics including two kingdoms, vocation and Christian ethics are at your fingertips via our new online Life Library. Many articles are lay-friendly, while theological papers offer more in-depth study. All are free and easily downloaded. Visit www.lcms.org/lifelibrary.
- Lutherans for Life features several articles on sexual purity on its website: www.lutheransforlife.org
- Titus 2-4 Life, founded by LCMS member Linda Bartlett, is a biblically-based mentoring organization that teaches men and women to model their faith and a Christian life to the younger generations. www.titus2-4life.org
- WAIT Training trains adults to teach middle and high school students character, relationship and marriage preparation education: www.myrelationshipcenter.org
- Focus on the Family has a number of resources relating to God’s design for marriage, preparing for marriage and sexual purity: www.focusonthefamily.com
- Concordia Publishing House publishes an age-by-age and gender-appropriate sex series called “Learning About Sex.” www.cph.org
- You Ask About Relationships: Questions Teens are Asking by Rev. Tim Pauls (CPH, 2006) covers sex and dating as well as other relationships from a Biblical perspective. www.cph.org
- Teen author and lecturer Pam Stenzel has some great resources in print and on video. www.pamstenzel.com

fashion. Dads can be an important participant in these discussions with daughters, too. This is also the time when children become intensely curious about the opposite sex. Again, answer questions truthfully and accurately.

Preteens may also begin to have questions about inappropriate sexual behavior at this time. By this time, most children have heard the term “gay” or “lesbian” and may want to know what those terms truly mean. If the subject comes up, you can explain that this is not the way God created us, nor is it the way God intends for people to show love. You can let them know that this behavior is mentioned in the Bible as sinful. You can also tell them that we can pray for people who are burdened by this sin and love them as well, but we can’t condone their decision to sin.

Middle school is crunch time. By now, you hopefully have talked with your child about sexuality and his thoughts and feelings so that it will not seem odd to him to have you continue more in-depth discussions. This is the age where listening becomes even more critical. This is also the age when your young teen becomes increasingly independent of you. It is important to stay in touch with him and his world. Ask casual questions in a non-threatening or humorous way. You also need to monitor who his friends are and know what your teen is watching. Don’t reactively ban things before you actually watch a television program or movie and make your own decision. Better yet, watch television or movies *with* your young teen! It may be an opportunity or a catalyst for a great discussion about his world view or opinions.

In addition, girls and boys will be going through some intense body changes during this period, so don’t let it take them by surprise. Make it a special time for them and highlight the importance of spiritual and intellectual maturity to go along with their maturing body. You can make these discussions casual over a special breakfast out, or use your special humor to lighten the moment, yet still maintain the importance of the moment.

Once your teen is in high school it is time to step up the parenting game in both offense and defense. I won’t lie — I worry as much as anybody else. But this is where our faith steps in to rescue us from our fear. I would suggest that you begin these years with a clear set of expectations for your child. Communicate these expectations and their logical consequences if not followed, prior to any problems. This discussion is not meant to be confrontational, but simply a set of clear boundaries that you can all adhere to. These family boundaries can include:

- Knowing who your teen is hanging out with before she is allowed to go to someone’s home.
- Making sure gatherings in homes or private places are supervised.
- Requiring frequent check-ins by phone when your teen is out and about.
- Intentionally schedule family time and reinforce the importance of family meals.
- Enjoy your child!

And let humor, again, be your tool — don’t be afraid to be “goofy.” It can break the tension and lighten the moment. A “goofy” Dad who obviously loves and cares for his kids will come off a lot better to your kids than a “cool” Dad who is too cool to talk to. And remember, your children are unique individuals with valuable ideas and creative thought processes.

2. Don’t — forget to ask questions. Ask them questions about their world and ask informal questions about their understanding of the issues. Don’t just talk about morality with them; engage them in discussions about other things as well. Ask them about their political views or opinions about culture. Remember to enjoy your children and listen, listen, listen.

3. Don’t — forget to pray, pray, pray and then repeat. God loves our children more than we do. Trust in His care and guidance for your teen and for you — and then don’t freak out.

I want to encourage you in your “vocation” as parent. In the doctrine of vocation the term literally means “calling.” We all have many different vocations — but our calling as “parent” is one of our most important vocations. When parents bring their children to Baptism, provide for their needs, discipline them, bring them up in His Word, and raise them to adulthood, God is at work every step of the way.

So that’s my two-cents worth on this subject. But I’m not an expert. I’m just a mom who cares about children — mine and others. I know you desperately love your children, too. I guess my message is simply that you can do far more for your children than any child psychologist “expert.” Remember that YOU are the expert on your children. Gather all the information you can about these unique individuals and shepherd them. You are the professional, and with the Lord’s help and reassurance — you can do it!

Valuing the estate of marriage

An interview with the Rev. Dr. Scott Bruzek and the Rev. George Borghardt

Studies show millennials are disillusioned with the idea of marriage. How does this attitude influence their decisions regarding sex, and can we teach them to wait by teaching them to aspire to marriage?

From a teen's perspective, marriage may be one of two things: either a far-off prospect, to be considered after high school, college, grad school and the securing of a proper job; or a prospect to be avoided altogether, seeing how it turned out for his parents, his friends' parents and practically everyone else he knows living in broken homes and with broken lives.

"From the church's perspective, marriage is a holy institution, pointing to Christ," says Rev. Dr. Scott Bruzek, Senior Pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Wheaton, Ill. "The great joy of marriage is that it is a gift from God. He is giving you a gracious gift, joining you with another person and blessing you at His altar."

"Ultimately, marriage is more than just two people becoming one flesh. We get married to show how faithful Jesus is to His bride, the Church," Bruzek says. "Jesus is monogamous, utterly faithful, always loving, unbelievably protective, and always a blessing to His church. That's how spouses are meant to love and treat one another."

Of course, we fall short. As adults, we fail to set that perfect example in our own marriages as Jesus did. We fail to teach our children that marriage is a holy estate, one to aspire to not last on the "to-do" list of life, but above college and career successes. We fail to remind them that sex is worth waiting for. And worst of all, we fail to give them credit for knowing it. In a recent poll conducted for *Time* magazine and Nickelodeon, parents and kids were asked, "At what age do you think premarital sex is appropriate?" Parents responded 18 years old. Kids, on the other hand, said 23.

Rev. George Borghardt, Senior Pastor at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in McHenry, Ill., and the Conference Executive for Higher Things, says that removing God from marriage, removing the God-given purpose of joining a male and female in one flesh, makes marriage just one more commitment in the eyes of the young. "When you take away that which is given only in marriage from the equation, you don't really have anything but a super-commitment, and who needs that?" he asks rhetorically.

Like generations before them, millennials think the world is about them, and that marriage is a matter of personal preference, Bruzek says. But more than ever, they face incredible pressure from an increasingly secular world.

"Our culture is pushing down so hard on today's youth," Borghardt says. "They're fighting against a world that says you test-drive beforehand. Boundaries are pushed further and further, and things that were totally unacceptable 30 years ago are commonplace today."

In his work with Higher Things, Borghardt talks to many youth who have a theoretically Biblical view of marriage but who struggle in the real world. He works with kids who realize that what they're doing is wrong and who have a genuine desire to "fix it." They want to undo what they've done and wonder if they can go back to being pure. "My answer to that is that the Lord has made you new again. He has made all things new, washed away all of your sins. They receive the Gospel with great joy and a desire to reform the way they view their relationships," Borghardt says.

What parents can do

- **Talk to them about marriage.** Parents often assume they can't talk to their teens, or that they won't listen. But studies show this generation still respects mom and dad (even if they don't admit it). According to a recent poll, when asked who they look up to most, parents topped the list at 79 percent of the vote. Use your influence to remind teens of the value of marriage and why they should make it a priority.
- **Talk to them about sex.** Yes, it's awkward — for both of you. But the more you talk about it, the more comfortable it gets. In a recent survey among teens, more than a third said they hadn't had even a single helpful conversation with their parents about sex. Where are they getting their information?
- **Empower them to make good choices.** Millennials think they were born to do great things. Use that to emphasize how saving sex for marriage will give them that freedom.
- **Don't encourage them to delay marriage indefinitely.** Today's youth are getting married later than ever (average 28 for men and 26 for women, compared to 23 for men and 21 for women in 1970). As parents, we tend to push them to finish school, get a job, and reach a point of economic security first. But their bodies were designed to mature at a much earlier age, leaving them to burn for an extra 15 years, as St. Paul advises against in 1 Corinthians 7:9.

And that's how it is for all of us sinners — and why we need to look to Christ, who provides forgiveness and strength in His Word and sacraments through the ministry of the Church. The church is the last, best chance for kids who come from broken homes, Bruzek says. “In the church, kids who never had a father around find the heavenly Father who loves them no matter what. In the church, kids find the bride of Christ who nurtures. In the church, kids who never understood what it was to have a good family life see what it is to live in love and community and forgiveness.”

In the church is how and where millennials begin to understand marriage in a divine way, Bruzek adds. “The church has exactly what the postmodern/millennial generation wants: Truth, beauty, community, spirituality, mercy, authenticity, forgiveness. They are ironically scorning the very thing that would bless them. It's the church's job to show them that.”



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Marriage ages stat: www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0005061.html

Sexual purity and men

By Ed and Ruthie Szeto

We've all heard the old advertising adage: “Sex sells.” Whether you agree or disagree with this statement, you cannot ignore the fact that men in America are inundated with low necklines, high hemlines, and scantily clad women wearing 5-inch spiked heels (which, when I was growing up, were the “uniform” of prostitutes). Doing a quick survey of American society today, one only needs to look as far as NFL cheerleaders, beer commercials, or car magazines to realize that the message American men receive today is that a “real” man can attract women like these using products like ours.

These sexualized images of women do what they are meant to do — fuel the desire of men's lust. Sadly, women clamor for the opportunity to be used to service those lusts. In their desire to be loved and cherished, women throughout history have mistaken men's lust for love, and they have been all too eager to fall for the lie. Ironically, today's women—fueled by the radical feminism of the sixties—have been reduced to ubiquitous sex objects. Despite being told they could be “just like men” and were entitled to an “empowering sexual freedom,” women have given in to co-existing with men who are conditioned to treat them poorly. Rather than seeing these young ladies as the women who will one day be their wives and mothers to their children, they instead believe that there is no pay-off for them to be honorable in their actions.

The state of our society today should not surprise us, as this atmosphere of sexual immorality has always been in the world. Even Martin Luther made comments about it when he wrote the Large Catechism on the Sixth Commandment: “Among us there is such a shameful mess and the very dregs of all vice and lewdness. Therefore, this commandment is directed against all kinds of unchastity, whatever it may be called” (LC I 202).

But for Christian men, and especially young boys who are just starting to form their thoughts, ideas and actions about what it means to “be a man” in today's world, how do we counteract this deluge of inappropriateness? How do we teach them that there is a different way, a proper way, to view the women around us? In 1 Timothy, we are told to treat “older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim. 5:2 ESV). As Christian men, we are exhorted not to view women as a sexual conquest or a prize to be won. But what does it mean to treat someone in all purity? One of my favorite dictionary definitions for “purity” is “freedom from sin or guilt; innocence; chastity.”

This definition fits directly with what God tells us: we are to “flee from sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18 ESV); God's will is that we “abstain from sexual immorality” (1 Thess. 4:3 ESV); and there's a warning that those who persist in “works of

the flesh” such as “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality . . . orgies . . . will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21 ESV).

How do we go about living a life of sexual purity? We must watch not only our deeds, but our very thoughts and words as well. We must take to heart the admonition of Jesus Christ when He says, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:27-28 ESV).

Recently we were in a shopping mall and I (Ed) noticed a couple walking toward a big Victoria Secret’s window ad. The woman was pushing a stroller and carrying another child — the man walking next to her not helping with the children. As they neared the picture window, the woman was busy fussing and caring for the children, but I watched the man’s eyes as he scanned the larger-than-life portrait of a woman in her lingerie, up and down and back and forth. I didn’t stop to speak with them, but one can only imagine what the man was thinking.

What are we to do when we are out shopping in the mall and are confronted by these types of images? I (Ed) have developed a habit where I turn my head away or look down at the floor until we have passed these inappropriate images. I have also given up a favorite television show or skipped a movie because it is saturated with women who are dressed to titillate. I do not do these things because I have to; rather I do them because I want to. I want to assure my wife that I am not comparing her to other women and that I do not have lustful thoughts for them. I also want to assure myself that I do not have wandering thoughts about women.

It is so easy to become jaded by what surrounds us 24/7. You may ask: why do I have to stop looking if the girls and women are putting it all out there? Think about it from the other side: ask yourself if you would want someone leering at your wife? Would you want someone ogling your sister? Do you want some guy preying on your 13-year-old daughter for his sexual purposes (or even younger thanks to shows like “Toddlers & Tiaras”)?

As Christian men, we have the responsibility to nurture that aspect of our nature that is God-pleasing — to honor women and protect them from being used and abused by the lustful desires of our carnal nature — and we have to do it within our Christian male fellowship; we have to teach each other and hold each other accountable, because to be sure, the culture around us will not help or encourage us. All they will say is, “Did God really say . . .?”

We must prepare our “minds for action” and “not be conformed to the passions of [our] former ignorance, but as he who called [us] is holy, [we] also be holy in all [our] conduct” (1 Peter 1: 13-16 ESV). Luther put it this way: “We must . . . resist temptation, offer protection, and rescue honor wherever there is danger and need. We must give help and counsel, so as to maintain our neighbor’s honor” (LC I 204)

I like to think of this as chivalry, or “the qualities idealized by knighthood, such as bravery, courtesy, honor, and gallantry toward women.” Why is it that we all love these tales of old, but somehow they do not translate into actions that are valued today?

It is time for Christian men to take a stand for purity. This will not be an easy thing to do and it will take courage to stand up against the tide, a tide that whispers: “times have changed”; “things don’t work that way anymore”; “if it’s out there you can have it.”

To help young Christian men, older men need to step up and “teach sound doctrine” and be “self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness” (Titus 2:1-2 ESV). It may not be easy, but it’s time to step up. Let us regain our God-given role to love and honor women as God loves His church: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25 ESV).



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Waiting with them

By Adriane Dorr

For a culture that's all about doing whatever's right for you, it's sure not a fan of waiting until you get married to have sex. In fact, it's completely tolerant of doing whatever you want with whomever you want as often as you want wherever you want, just as long as you're actually doing it.

The result? A lot of women with deep-seated emotional problems and a lot of cold-hearted men . . . and yet no one can seem to figure out why.

Christians aren't without fault on this one either. A recent study indicates that "80 percent of unmarried evangelical young adults (18 to 29) said that they have had sex — slightly less than 88 percent of unmarried adults." True love, apparently, doesn't really wait.

Waiting is difficult. There's no getting around that.

Very, very difficult.

But just because something's difficult doesn't mean we give up or give in. We struggle, we pray, we plow through this life in faith that our Lord has a good plan and a good purpose for our lives.

At the same time, it's easy to fall off the other side of the horse, to judge those who know what's right and don't seem to care, or to look down on those who may have slipped up just once.

C. S. Lewis speaks to this pride, noting that sexual sins are often seen as the most grotesque, the most awful, when, in fact, sins against the Spirit are to be feared more. There's more hope for the Christian who sleeps with his girlfriend one night and immediately feels awful and repents, he says, than an atheist who sleeps around and could care less.

So, how do we as a church reclaim holding out for marriage? How do we teach our ladies that just because a guy takes you out to dinner doesn't mean he has the right to take what belongs to her future husband? How do we teach our young men that "making each other wait may mean going against the post-sexual-revolution norm" while simultaneously reminding them that "people, unlike animals, have the capacity to rise above herd mentality"?

We pray. We repent. We spend lots of time in God's Word. We receive the Sacrament regularly. We talk about it. We talk about it with our kids when they're young. We don't fall prey to the "Well, they're going to have sex anyway, so I may at least tell them how to be protected."

No.

We tell our young women about their worth and their value. We tell our young men what it means to be a man. We lift up the values of waiting. And we wait with them.

Meanwhile, the church keeps churning out good pastors. Parents keep being faithful parents. Friends keep correcting friends in love. And so we soldier on.



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Calling All Readers

We want to hear from you! If you've got ideas for future issues, comments, feedback on articles you've read in *Notes for Life* or news and life outreach stories from your part of the world, please let us know. Write to lifeministries@speaking4life.com with your stories, and be sure to include your name, city and state, or post on our Facebook wall. Find us at www.facebook.com/LCMSLife.



Coming Up

Planted in Two Kingdoms: There's a happy medium between disengaging from the world and wrestling with the political pigs: it's called "In this world, but not of this world." In the next issue of *Notes for Life*, we'll discuss Christians and a healthy involvement in public policy, with a special preview of the 2013 Life Conference in Washington D.C. Not a subscriber? Don't miss the next issue! Sign up at www.lcms.org/enews to receive this free quarterly e-mail newsletter.

Why should pro-life Christians care about the HHS anti-conscience mandate?

By Maggie Kerner

Director, LCMS Life and Health Ministries

As I'm sure you are aware, current events in healthcare reform are centering around the latest U.S. Health and Human Care Department (HHS) mandate for all religious employers and insurance plans to provide free birth control products (even those that can cause early abortions) to women. The LCMS is deeply concerned about this and is very active in advocacy against this mandate. We feel that this requirement is not only against our Biblical values that honor the sanctity of all human life from conception, but also an affront to our 1st Amendment right to religious freedom.

At stake is the left's insistence that this is strictly a women's health issue and is about gender equity, rather than our understanding that this is about religious freedom and an over-reaching government mandate to force religious insurance plans and employers to pay for things that go against our beliefs.

If you haven't already done so, please check out our informative web link at www.lcms.org/hhsmandate. You can find LCMS President Rev. Matthew Harrison's testimony before U.S. Congress on this important development in our nation's history, in addition to an op-ed article I wrote for the publication *Christianity Today*. You can also watch my testimony on a women's panel at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C.

The LCMS is working arm-in-arm with other organizations on Capitol Hill and other religious denominations to take the same message to the public on this topic. Our immediate goal is to try to defer the red herring argument (all over the media) that this is only a women's issue and that women are being excluded from the debate on this topic in Washington. Instead, we must communicate to the public that this is a religious liberty issue and our ability to provide mercy as a church — according to our beliefs — are being threatened.

Despite the media's insistence that there was some sort of "accommodation" from the administration toward churches, this is simply not the case. The original rule that severely violated our religious liberty has not been changed, but finalized. The only thing the purported "accommodation" did was provide a few extra months for churches to determine how, or if, they were going to follow the rule — essentially having to make the choice between violating our consciences or pay a large penalty fine.

The Department of Health and Human Services has vaguely promised some kind of later "accommodation," but apparently, only after the November election. Even so, at best, the government has recently confirmed to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that religious institutions will still be required to furnish all forms of birth control (even those that can cause early abortions) to their employees or risk financial penalty.

Along with the whole Christian church on earth, the LCMS believes in our responsibility to bring care and healing to a hurting society, to both body and soul. There is a theological name for that from the ancient Greek. It is called *diakonia*, which simply means "service." It is not charity; it is mercy. As you so well know,

Contact Your Elected Officials

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To contact the White House

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Switchboard (202) 456-1414

Fax (202) 456-2461

TTY/TDD phone numbers for hearing impaired only:

Comments (202) 456-6213

Visitor's office (202) 456-2121

President Barack Obama

president@whitehouse.gov

Vice President Joe Biden

vice.president@whitehouse.gov

mercy is intrinsic to every Christian. It's not what we do. It's who we are. It is our identity. It is the mark of our church.

For religious people, mercy is not confined to our houses of worship. It is not about caring for ourselves. It is about caring for others, those outside the walls of the sanctuary and in the most needful areas of our society. The problem with this HHS mandate is that it narrowly defines a church as including only the work that goes on inside the sanctuary and with services only administered to its members. This definition excludes from protection all religious educational institutions and centers of religious mercy such as soup kitchens, religious social welfare centers and the like simply because they serve anyone in need, regardless of their beliefs.

Faith-based organizations, no matter what denomination or creed, have a long history of serving their neighbors in need. Just as an example, there are thousands of faith-based non-profit hospitals across our nation that grew out of this legacy – caring people of faith living out Christ's call to care for the suffering among us. This is the foundation upon which our compassionate, modern American health-care delivery system has been built.

Faith-based organizations today have a vested interest in our society, and we have much to contribute for our future. We can be a valuable asset to the government as we help to address the many needs in our society. But we can only do so if we are given the freedom to work within the framework of our beliefs. The HHS mandate does not allow that. It does not allow for the free exercise of our First Amendment religious rights.

Remember, this debate is not about contraception. Nobody is advocating for denial of access. Nobody is threatening women's health. Nobody is outlawing anything for the general population. Rather, this debate is about being forced to pay for products and services contrary to our religious beliefs. We cannot be expected to check our faith at the door.

In addition, the HHS anti-conscience mandate says much about the trajectory of movement on future issues of religious freedom and our ability to express our faith within society. We fear that this current mandate is just the tip of the iceberg, leading the way to more government intrusion in the expression of our religious beliefs.

The especially troubling thing about this mandate is that it was imposed by un-elected bureaucrats who were appointed to the administration. The only way we can escape this mandate is to find some legislative way through our elected members of congress to repeal this mandate or challenge this rule through the courts. To that end, much work is being done currently on Capitol Hill as we work alongside our partners in this fight. There will be number of congressional hearings from different congressional committees and we hope to see a number of bills proposed in both branches of congress that all legislators — from both sides of the aisle — will be able to support and pass.

In the meantime, please make yourselves aware of this important battle and check in periodically at www.lcms.org/hhsmandate for news. You can also download a free informative bulletin insert for your congregation on this page. And please consider calling or writing your congress members to inform them of your opinions on this matter. If you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call or write me.

Movie Review: *October Baby*

by Ed and Ruthie Szeto

October Baby is a touching movie about a young woman who, upon learning that she was adopted after a failed abortion attempt, embarks on a journey to find her birth mother. The movie's tagline, "Every life is beautiful," plays off of Psalm 139: "For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (vv. 13–14).

The main character, nineteen-year-old Hannah, collapses on stage during a play. After a series of medical tests, her doctor and parents tell her of her premature birth and adoption after a failed abortion. Hannah's doctor explains that her life-long and current medical issues (epilepsy, asthma, etc.) are related to her traumatic birth.

Hannah struggles with anger and betrayal at her parents for concealing her adoption and the circumstances of her birth. At the same time, she struggles to understand who she is, where she came from and why her mother would make the decision to end the life of her own child.



With little information to go on other than her birthplace of Mobile, Ala., Hannah embarks on a road trip with her best friend, Jason, hoping to find something that will lead her to her birth mother and answers to her questions.

Hannah finds her birth mother (a very strong and moving performance by Shari Rigby) but is devastated when she receives no answers and no happy ending. Instead, she is rejected and denied. Defeated and lost, Hannah is brought home by her father.

Although she and her parents are Christians and Hannah's father finally apologizes to her for hiding the truth, Hannah is stuck in her anger and pain. Searching for something she can't name, Hannah visits a Roman Catholic church. A caring priest tells her that what she's looking for can't be found on a road trip or in a cathedral but only on the cross. He reminds her of God's forgiving love and the blessings that come with forgiving others.

In this forgiveness, Hannah finds her way back home, forgiving her adoptive parents and, ultimately, giving her birth mother the gift of her forgiveness. This provides the most compelling moment of the movie as her mother faces the reality of the choice she made 20 years earlier.

Why we like this movie

Despite some of the weak dialogue and superfluous plot devices used to move the story forward, *October Baby* is a credible and refreshing movie with beautiful cinematography and some terrific performances. The primary themes of forgiveness and redemption (along with its clearly pro-life, Christian message) will be satisfying to Christian viewers. Conversely, secular critics and those squarely in the pro-choice camp posit that the movie is trite, melodramatic and unbelievable because of its basic premise of a child surviving an abortion.

One of the strongest performances in the movie is by Jasmine Guy. Guy portrays the nurse, Mary, who was present the day of Hannah's mother's abortion attempt. Most of the truth about the reality of abortion comes from Mary's re-telling of the story of Hannah's mother, the abortion attempt and Hannah's subsequent birth. "It was tissue," Mary says to Hannah, explaining what the culture led her to believe about the abortions she assisted with. "Tissue that couldn't survive. Non-viable tissue."

Mary's penetrating line, "When you hear something enough times, somehow you start to believe it" also explains much of our culture's rapid shift toward the acceptance of the incomprehensible: women killing their pre-born children while calling it a personal choice.

The additional themes of post-abortion healing, chivalry, adoption, sexual purity, obeying the Fourth Commandment and parental sacrifice make *October Baby* a life-affirming movie that does not disappoint.

Shari Rigby, who portrays the birth mother, is post-abortive but had not revealed that to anyone until the writers sent her the film's manuscript. Her heartfelt revelation during the closing credits gives us the final "ah" moment in a movie that has already delivered.

Playing a role that so closely mirrored her own life helped to bring "complete healing in the moment. That wasn't acting," she said. Instead, it gave her a chance to find comfort and assurance from Christ. "It's over," she said, and "[I've] been forgiven."

For more information on the movie, go to www.octoberbabymovie.net. An additional resource containing short messages can be found at www.everylifeisbeautiful.com.

“When you hear something enough times, somehow you start to believe it.”

In the news

Obama Defends Administration's Refusal to Relax Plan B Restrictions

Washington, D.C. — President Obama supports his administration's decision to block unrestricted sale of the morning-after pill to people younger than 17, a move that dismayed women's advocates when it was announced by Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. Sebelius said that she had overruled the Food and Drug Administration, which had decided to make the contraceptive available to people of all ages directly off drugstore and supermarket shelves, without a prescription. Full story: www.washingtonpost.com.

Exploring Gardasil Vaccinations from a Pro-Life Perspective

LifeNews.com — Dr. Gerard Nadal, Ph.D., National Director of Medical Students for Life and LifeNews.com columnist, discusses the HPV vaccination from a pro-life perspective. Full story: www.lifenews.com.

Did you know?

January 2012 March for Life

On a cold, rainy Monday morning in January, more than 150 Lutherans from 12 states and Germany marched with 250,000 pro-lifers at the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. This year marks the 39th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in all 50 states. Read more about the 39th annual March for Life and see photos and videos at www.lcms.org/marchforlife.

Save the date: 40th Anniversary March for Life and LCMS Life Conference

Mark your calendars! On Saturday, Jan. 26, 2013, LCMS Life Ministries will host a day-long pro-life conference in Washington, D.C., the day after the national March for Life on Jan. 25, 2013, is a significant year that marks the 40th anniversary of Roe v. Wade.



The conference will feature Lutheran speakers and Christians who work on Capitol Hill who are involved in pro-life outreach in the kingdom on the left, who will talk about how to get involved in the public square as an advocate for life.

Mark your calendars now and plan to attend this unprecedented LCMS conference for life. More information at www.lcmslifeconference.org.

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