

Abstinence

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It seems a strange thing to one my age to have to defend abstinence, that is, to value the reserving of sex for marriage. I don't know if my generation was less likely to engage in sex before marriage or not, but it was readily admitted that it was something done quietly rather than paraded as a norm. And it is even more strange that those who did wait till marriage should be reluctant to admit it publicly. We have been shamed into believing that it is not politically correct to parade one's premarital virginity as one would one's loss of it. Sex before marriage was secret because our generation knew there was something to hide. There was something more than the absence of social acceptance that made premarital sex morally unacceptable. We called it, "living in sin" and so it was, and so it still is.

After thirty plus years of premarital sex being promoted as a harmless, meaningless form of recreation, my generation is reluctant to criticize their children's promiscuity for fear of alienating them. If my generation was bold in speaking the truth about such things as the right to privacy and reproductive freedoms, it lost its way when it came to speaking the truth about the relationship between sex and the commitment called marriage. Those who either brazenly-intentionally or naively-unintentionally deconstructed sex through support of sex education in public schools abandoned belief that abstinence until marriage is possible and worthwhile. Nor did it seem to matter that divorce rates are higher in marriages where premarital sex was the norm.

For forty years we have had birth control technology to guard against pregnancy before marriage and for thirty years, abortion to deal with it if it occurs. We now have rampant sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS and an increase in infertility among married couples due, in part, to premaritally acquired STDs. We have become a liberated culture at risk for losing the phenomena of faithful marriages, and a people unable to admit our failings and sins through self-examination and repentance.

If there is a light on the horizon it is that some younger people in recent years are beginning to display a natural inclination to want more from life than meaningless sex. As has been the case through history, it seems to be the young women who are teaching the young men to look beyond the moment to the lifetime commitment called marriage where learning to make love replaces "having sex." This trend, fed by the grace of God, may blossom into more than my generation every dreamed possible.