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SHANNON ETHRIDGE
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Every
Young Woman's
Battle

**Guarding Your Mind, Heart, and Body
in a Sex-Saturated World**

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Names and facts from stories contained in this book have been changed, but the emotional and sexual struggles portrayed are true stories as related to the author through personal interviews, letters, or e-mails.

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f o r e w o r d

Have you ever become frustrated working through a maze in a puzzle book? The goal is to discover a pathway from the starting point to the end without crossing over any lines. However, the multitude of dead ends can make this a true test of your patience and concentration.

Imagine a *giant* maze the size of a football field. Suppose someone offers you a ten-thousand-dollar reward if you can successfully make your way from start to finish within four minutes. You are certainly motivated, but when you enter the maze, you find that you can't see anything but the nine-foot-high walls directly in front and on each side of you. There are no markers to direct your path, and you have no way of discerning when a dead end is right around the corner. Your chances of victory are next to impossible. You need the help of a trusted advisor who is more familiar with this maze than you are.

If my daughter asked me to help her with such a challenge, do you know what I would do? I'd get a forty-foot ladder and two cell phones. I'd give one phone to her and carry the other with me to the top of the ladder where I'd have an aerial view of the maze. Then I'd call her to give guidance from above. I could warn her when she follows a dead end path, and I would tell her when to turn right and when to turn left.

Now let me ask you this: Would my daughter choose to disregard my instructions and attempt to trust her own sense of direction in that giant maze? Of course not. She would listen carefully to my every word, because she knows that I can see things ahead that she can't, that I am worthy of her trust, and that I love her and want her to succeed.

All young people face a similar challenge, only the prize is much greater than a measly ten thousand dollars. The prize is the health, happiness, peace, and

contentment that come from saving yourself for marriage, choosing a good mate, and bringing beautiful children into the world. I have four such children, and after thirty years of being a husband and a dad, I can honestly tell you that nothing on this side of heaven brings me greater joy than my family. You're probably one of the 93 percent of teenagers who expect to marry someday and the 91 percent who hope to have children.¹ If so, please know that your entire future, including your ability to have a successful marriage and your own children someday, is made up of one decision after another. You may not always have the foresight to know where each decision will lead you.

Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." All over the world, young people are making wrong decisions that seem right to them. Whether it's the movies they watch or the lies they tell their parents or how far they're willing to go on a date, many young people think, *It's no big deal... Everybody does it... It feels right to me.* They can't tell the difference between right and wrong, because they have no moral compass to direct them in the path of absolute truth.

Because of their poor sense of direction, many of your peers are making decisions that lead them not toward an abundant, joy-filled life, but toward destruction and even death. Each day in the United States,

- 4,219 teenagers contract a sexually transmitted disease, and many of these will later face a premature death as a result;
- 1,106 teenage girls abort their unborn babies; and
- 6 teens commit suicide, often because of a broken heart or out of guilt over a premarital sexual relationship.²

Every single day we lose precious lives because of one former decision made in the heat of the moment. Choices that seem right to these young people eventually lead down the wrong path entirely.

You have to decide whether you are going to trust your own judgment in your pursuit of sexual purity or whether you are going to look to a trusted advisor for guidance. Even though I can't be waiting on a forty-foot ladder for your cell phone call, I want you to know that you have a heavenly Father who sees the big picture, knows exactly which turns lead to dead ends, and recognizes the clear path toward victory. God has divine knowledge of where each and every decision will take you.

Isaiah 30:21 says, “Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’ ” You may not hear an audible voice with the ears on your head, but if you are trusting in Jesus Christ to guide you through life’s maze, you can hear Him with the ears of your heart—if you tune out the distractions of the world and listen for His perfect direction. He will not fail you in your time of need. He is completely trustworthy. He loves you so much, and He certainly wants to see you succeed.

As a matter of fact, He so desires that you consistently choose the right path that He gave you a road map (the Bible) and a trusted advisor (the Holy Spirit) to guide you. You may think that God is some kind of cosmic kill-joy who just throws out a bunch of “thou shalt nots” to steal all your fun. But God’s commandments offer us valuable precepts—or guidelines—to live by. These precepts will do two things: protect you and provide for you. Think of these precepts as an umbrella. As long as you walk under them, you are protected from getting wet and provided with dryness and comfort. But moving out from underneath that umbrella brings uncomfortable consequences. Similarly, when you cherish your sexuality and guard it according to God’s plan, you’ll be protected from sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancy, unhealthy relationships, and extreme emotional roller-coaster rides. You’ll be provided with safety and security and hope for a promising future. If, however, you ignore God’s guidance and move out from under His precepts, you will most certainly experience painful consequences down the road.

Over the past four decades, I’ve spoken to over seven million young people in over eighty-four countries about *Why True Love Waits*, how to discern *Right from Wrong*, and most recently how to move *Beyond Belief to Convictions*. Most of the questions I receive from teenagers as I travel and speak have to do with sex, love, or dating relationships. While I’m concerned about what you and your peers may be tempted to do when alone with the opposite sex, I’m more concerned with what you believe about your sexuality and God’s desire for your purity. That’s why I’m thrilled that you are holding this book in your hands. I know that you are going to discover it to be an invaluable tool that will lead you down the path toward a renewed mind, a strong spirit, a pure heart, a healthy body, and tremendously rewarding relationships with others and with God. I pray that you’ll take every

word to heart, apply these principles in your daily life, and allow God to lead you toward the rich prize of a truly abundant life.

If you are a parent reading this, I want to encourage you not just to give this book to your daughter but to read through it with her and talk with her about this traditionally taboo but vitally important topic. If you think that your child doesn't want to discuss such an intimate subject with you, please think again. Although she may not beg you to talk about sex with her, nearly seven out of ten teens (69 percent) agree it would be easier for them to postpone sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents. The same percentage also says that they *are* ready to listen to things that parents thought they were *not* ready to hear. When asked about the reasons teenage girls have babies, 78 percent of white and 70 percent of African American teenagers reported lack of communication between a girl and her parents as one of the key factors. Thirty-one percent of teens say that their parents, not their friends, have the most influence on their decisions about sex.³

The bottom line is this: When it comes to sexuality, your daughter needs your guidance and wants it probably far more than you realize. Don't wait for her to bring up the topic. That may never happen. Be proactive in helping her develop strong personal convictions about guarding her sexuality and give her a reliable moral compass. Chances are, because of your guidance, love, and trustworthiness, you'll someday watch her emerge as a victor in every young woman's battle for sexual and emotional purity.

—JOSH MCDOWELL

d e d i c a t i o n a n d a c k n o w l e d g m e n t s

from Shannon Ethridge:

For Erin.

You bring unspeakable joy into all of our lives.
I pray your hunger for God and your passion for purity
will only increase as you continue to blossom.



from Stephen Arterburn:

For Madeline.

I am so glad to be your father, and I will always
be there to help you walk in the footsteps
of your heavenly Father.

As always, my first thanks goes to Jesus Christ for entrusting me with the vision for this book. I pray that it's everything You wanted it to be, and that it touches every life You want it to touch.

To Greg, my husband and best friend, thank you for all that you do and all that you are to me and our children. You are a wonderful helpmate and father, and I love you fiercely.

To my "almost as tall as me" baby girl, Erin. Thank you for helping us proof this manuscript to make sure we didn't sound too old-fashioned. You make a delightful writing partner and an even more delightful daughter.

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Last, but certainly not least, a special thank you to Steve Arterburn, Fred Stoeker, Kenny Luck, and Mike Yorkey. It is such an honor and a privilege to partner with you guys. Thank you for laying such a strong foundation with the Every Man series.

—SHANNON ETHRIDGE

a n o t e t o p a r e n t s

In *Every Young Woman's Battle*, we discuss sexual purity from emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical perspectives, teaching readers to guard their minds, hearts, and bodies in this sex-saturated world. We do so using very frank, contemporary language, writing especially for young women in their teens to early twenties.

Perhaps you are wondering how frank we've been or if this book is appropriate for your daughter at this point in her life. If she regularly watches television, listens to pop music, or reads teen magazines, nothing in this book will be too graphic or shocking for her. Our goal is to present a credible, helpful, Christian perspective on the images your daughter is exposed to every day.

If, on the other hand, you believe she is already committed to sexual purity, or you fear that a frank discussion on the topic may be inappropriate for her, we encourage you to review *Every Young Woman's Battle* before passing it on to your daughter. We have made every effort to address sensitive issues with tact and respect, emphasizing God's desire that young women live with sexual integrity. Our commitment to helping young women requires us to be honest and open with them, and we hope that our doing so will pave the way for your daughter to make many healthy choices about her sexuality.

introduction

(by Stephen Arterburn)

Years ago when I was dating, young men used young women like you for their own pleasure. They manipulated and pressured girls sexually in order to prop up their own flagging egos.

Nothing felt better to these guys than to prove they still “had it,” so they would go out and get whatever they wanted from any girl who would give it to them. These young men didn’t see girls as people, but as inferior objects there for a guy’s pleasure. They judged a young woman by her body parts and how much she exposed them and what she gave away on a date. They never thought much about what she might be feeling or thinking; they just wanted what they wanted, and they expected a girl to give it if she wanted the “relationship” to continue. The way these guys saw it, girls were there to help guys prove they were “real” men.

When I was in high school and college, every young woman had a reputation—those who would “put out” and those who wouldn’t. Guys would compare notes—“Did she or didn’t she?”—and brag about their sexual conquests. The girls with a reputation for giving guys what they wanted may have gone out on lots of dates, but they didn’t have healthy dating relationships. Young men wanted to look, touch, and feel these girls, but they didn’t want to commit to a girl with such a reputation. They simply took what they could get for as long as they wanted it, and then moved on to the next sexual target.

The young men of my day would say or do whatever a girl wanted so that she would be willing to give him her body, even if it meant saying things such as “I love you,” “You’re special,” or “I have never felt like this before.” He would take her out to eat or to a movie, because he believed those things would ensure that he’d receive payoff at the end of the evening. He’d make her feel loved and cared for

because he knew that was how he could get what he wanted from her. But what these young men took, they never gave back. Each time they had sex with a girl, they took a piece of her soul.

Why am I'm telling you this? Because I want you to know what guys are like—even Christian guys. You see, guys haven't changed when it comes to how they view women. The situation has not improved. In fact, in many ways it has become much worse. I don't want you to be used and abused. You are a special creation of God, and He loves you even more than I love my daughter. He wants the best for you, as I want the best for her. God does not want you to be used, nor does He want you to use others. He wants sexual and emotional integrity for you. He has a great life ahead for you, and you can most easily find it if you find a way to live with sexual integrity.

You are growing up in a culture that does not value sexual integrity and purity. Instead, it values instant gratification and pleasure at all costs. Some of you have begun to live by the values of this culture. You have abandoned what you know to be right deep down inside. You have stopped listening to the small voice inside of you that wants to guide you to stay pure and live with self-respect and high self-esteem. Perhaps you no longer resist the sexual advances of young men, or perhaps you have become the aggressor. You may be the one going after the boys and participating in sexual behavior that dishonors God, your family, and yourself. If you have, this book will show you a path to healing and a second chance with God. If you have not, it will help you develop a defense for yourself, your reputation, and the life God intends you to live. My prayer, our prayer, is that you will read this book, believe it, and live according to the truths we present here.

Before you read what my coauthor, Shannon, has written, I want to tell you what has happened to the young men of my day. We have all gotten older, but many have not gotten wiser. Our culture has changed significantly in the past decade. Sadly, the Internet, television, movies, and advertising have made women seem more like objects than ever before. Men have gone from feeding their sexual obsessions with young women to feeding them with sexual images anywhere and everywhere: billboards, lingerie ads, swimsuit special editions, over two million porn sites, and network television shows. They've become hooked on images, counterfeits of the real thing. Everywhere they look they see women as objects of

gratification. Believe me—more men than ever are looking at women as objects to be used for their own pleasure. For every man it's a battle just to view women in the proper light. For many it's the battle of a lifetime.

The more a guy sees and experiences pornography and other sexually explicit images, the more he wants. He tells himself he is just being a man, just doing what all men do. "It's normal" or "It's not hurting anyone," he says as his focus shifts more away from the real women in his life and more and more to the unreal world of sexual gratification at any cost. Many husbands—even Christian husbands—regularly enter a private world of sexual pleasure and shame. For many, sex inside of marriage is no longer enough because they have become hooked on sex as conceived by our wayward culture.

Many men want out but have not known how to get out. About three years ago, Fred Stoeker and I wrote a book called *Every Man's Battle* because we wanted to give men a strategy for freedom and help them win this battle. The book quickly became a best seller and remains on the bestseller list today. The fathers who read it wanted something for their sons, so Fred Stoeker and I wrote *Every Young Man's Battle*. It, too, hit the bestseller list. Fred and I began receiving hundreds of e-mails and a few letters from young men saying that the book had changed their perspective on sex and young women and that they wanted to live the life of sexual integrity that we had written about.

Then something else began to happen. We began receiving e-mails from women expressing a desire for a book of their own on sexual integrity. They, too, wanted to live according to God's standard. Additionally, readers of *Every Woman's Battle* asked for a book for their daughters, so Shannon and I decided to write the book you hold in your hands. We hope it meets a tremendous need for frank talk about your sexuality and that it gives you some solid answers on how to live in a culture designed to throw you off God's track.

You have a job to do, one that will impact your future fulfillment and security. The job? To successfully integrate your sexuality with the rest of your life. We want you to be the same person on Friday night that you are on Sunday when you are at church. We don't want you to live a Christian life in front of some people but then act differently around guys. A segmented life brings confusion, guilt, and often despair.

We don't want that for you. We want you to have a healthy view of sex. We want you to believe that sex as God intended it is so great that it's worth waiting until marriage to experience. We want you to be comfortable with yourself and with others, deeply connected, and free of guilt and shame. We want the best for you and hope this little book will be the beginning of your seeking, finding, and living the best life possible.



understanding our battle



daring to be truthful

If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

JOHN 8:31-32

Truth or dare. You've probably played this game with girlfriends at a slumber party or perhaps been warned by your parents not to play it at all. It's a game where you agree to do anything another player dares you to do, regardless of how embarrassing or disgusting it may be, or else to tell the absolute truth in response to a particular question, regardless of how private or humiliating your answer may be.

As a young girl, I never opted out of playing such games. It never even occurred to me I had a choice. My friends dared me to do some ridiculous things—eat a ketchup, mustard, and mayonnaise sandwich; drink a Dr. Pepper as fast as possible and then burp as loudly as I could in front of my friend's older brother; and passionately kiss my stuffed monkey while my friend took a Polaroid picture. But I usually took the dare because I didn't want to answer questions such as these: Who do you think is the cutest boy in school? How many boys have you kissed? How far have you ever gone with a boy? Eating something gross or making an idiot out of myself was easy compared to telling the truth about certain things.

Sometimes the truth hurts, and it's much easier if we can keep it hidden. As a matter of fact, sometimes the secrets we harbor are so painful that we don't want to face them ourselves. We assume that these secrets will go away if we don't think or talk about them with anyone. But the opposite is true. Shameful secrets fester like a splinter in a finger, and it's much better to name the secret and to let someone help us remove it from our lives so the wound will heal.

You will read many stories in this book from young women (ages twelve to twenty) who have courageously done just that. They've dared to tell the truth about

their battle to guard their minds, hearts, and bodies from sexual sin. We hope that you will learn some lessons the easy way and avoid making mistakes of your own, or that you will recognize the truth about any struggles you are currently facing in your battle for sexual purity and understand how you can overcome them.

IGNORANCE IS NOT A VIRTUE

You may find some of the stories in this book eyeopening or surprising. Please know that we are not trying to shock, disgust, or defile* you in any way. We want you to be wise to the ways of the world so you can guard yourself against them. Ignorance is not a spiritual gift, nor is it a virtue. You can be wise *and* innocent at the same time, and we intend to prepare you to make responsible decisions if and when temptations come across your path. Also, don't assume that the temptations we'll be discussing won't come to call in your life. The apostle Paul wrote:

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!...
Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled.... Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."... Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality." (1 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Ephesians 5:3)

Let's peek into the private lives of some of your peers who were brave enough to tell the truth about their battles for sexual purity.

MOLLY'S PRIVATE WAR

Molly's struggle began when she stumbled upon a pornographic television show and later chose to stumble onto it again...and again...and again.

* *defile*—to corrupt one's purity

I know that it was wrong and that everyone messes up big time, but I still feel bad, mainly because I not only exposed myself to pornography,* but I also exposed two of my very best friends. One of them was a good enough friend to me to confess to her parents what we had done. My parents were extremely upset, and I don't blame them. They even helped me by having someone change the television settings so that nothing pornographic comes in now, and that channel is blank.

I was fine for a while and tried very hard to forget what I saw, which worked for the most part. But recently I have developed a habit of masturbating† to these images and cannot stop. I know this is wrong, and I feel dirty and guilty. I have confessed my sins to God, but that doesn't seem to be enough. I don't want anyone to find out, because I know that they would be disgusted and disappointed in me.

We're sure that if Molly had known how addicting pornography can be, she would have avoided it altogether. If either pornography or habitual masturbation have become problems in your life, this book will help you break free from these habits that hinder your sexual integrity and spiritual peace.

LAUREN'S PRIVATE WAR

Lauren attended a sexuality conference when she was in junior high and made a pledge to remain sexually abstinent until marriage. Now in high school, she is disheartened by the choices her friends are making and can't help but wonder if it's realistic for her to maintain her pledge.

I went to a dance at my school and most of my friends were freak dancing, moving around like they were having sex with their clothes on, and doing nasty stuff with each other—girls with guys, girls with girls, anything goes.

* *pornography*—material that graphically demonstrates sexually erotic behavior

† *masturbating*—touching one's own genitals in order to cause self-arousal

Everyone looked like they were having so much fun, and they kept telling me to lighten up and join the party. Also, a couple of my girlfriends accepted a dare to perform oral sex* on some guys in the back of the bus—and now those girls are *really* popular with the guys. I try to remind myself that they are popular for the wrong reasons, but sometimes I wonder if I'm being too prudish and am missing out on all the fun it seems that everyone else is having.

We know many of you reading this book want to maintain sexual purity, but like Lauren, you feel all alone in your desire and are wondering if it's even possible. Don't be discouraged. It's not only possible, but we believe you'll agree that it's much better to wait to enjoy sex according to God's perfect plan—in marriage someday—than to engage in sexual activities as if they're just another recreational hobby. Keep reading and we'll show you exactly how you can do just that.

EMMA'S PRIVATE WAR

Emma was daring enough to share the truth about her struggles in hopes of encouraging other young women to avoid the mistakes she made. She felt very insecure in her early teens and believed something was wrong with her because guys never seemed attracted to her. Even though she had good relationships with her parents, she wanted to be pursued by a young man. In order to make herself look more like the popular girls at school, she started dieting and exercising to lose weight.

It didn't take long for my weight loss obsession to turn into a serious eating disorder. I felt desperate for boys to notice my slender body, and I craved compliments like crazy. When a guy did compliment me, it puffed me up with pride and I felt like I was really something. I would hang around him more as some sort of "payment" for the attention he gave me as well as a "security deposit" so that he'd keep the compliments coming. I'd also flirt by linking arms with him buddy-style, bumping into him on purpose, or leaning up against him.

* *oral sex*—placing one's mouth on the partner's genital area for sexual stimulation

Over the next three years I got into a couple of relationships that I thought were serious, but the guys weren't so serious. I gave these guys all I had, including my body, but eventually I got dumped for the next girl. Every time I experienced another breakup, I wondered what was wrong with me. Why didn't he want me anymore? Was I not attractive enough? Was I still too fat? Abusing my body and giving it away was how I tried to get the attention and affirmation I wanted from a guy, but what I got was never enough.

The battle to be thin enough, as well as the battle to get your emotional needs met by any boyfriend, can seem like a never-ending one. If you've found yourself craving a relationship so much that you engage in behaviors you are not proud of, this book is for you. It will help you gain a healthy balance between your natural, God-given desire to be loved and your ability to avoid sexually tempting situations.

As a matter of fact, I wish I had known the information in this book when I was your age and fighting my own battles.

SHANNON'S PRIVATE WAR

If anyone had asked me when I was twelve if I wanted to remain a virgin until marriage, I would have said, "Of course I do!"

At thirteen, I would have said, "I think so."

By fourteen, I would have replied, "Maybe."

At age fifteen, my response would have been, "I don't see how that is possible."

Unfortunately, my innocence became just a memory that year. I was date raped, which I never told anyone about for fear that I would be blamed. I had, after all, flirted with this eighteen-year-old boy to get his attention and had agreed to spend time alone with him behind my parents' back, so I mistakenly said nothing. Because I kept this secret, no one helped me heal from the abuse or told me I was still a virgin in God's eyes. (We'll talk more about the nature of virginity in the next chapter.)

A few months later, my parents allowed me to begin dating. Because I believed that my virginity had already been stolen from me, I didn't feel I had a reason to withhold my body from most of the young men I dated. Sex became a routine part

of my romantic relationships—the price that I felt I must pay for the attention and affection that I craved. This is one of the reasons I want you to read this book. I want you to have information I did not have. I also want you to live without secrets and to be open about who you are and how you feel about boys and what they want to do with you.

NO EXEMPTIONS FROM SEXUAL TEMPTATION

As you read about the darker side of my younger days, you might think I was a messed-up girl from a dysfunctional home and a bad neighborhood, or that I wasn't a Christian, or that I wasn't too smart.

Wrong.

I grew up in rural Northeast Texas with educated, middle-class parents who were faithfully married to each other. My family lived in a modest home in the country where safety was never an issue. Mother took me to church regularly, and I confirmed my belief in Jesus Christ at the age of twelve. I even served as president of my youth group for several years. I got straight As in high school and went on to graduate from college.

As my life shows, you don't have to be messed up or even come from a messed-up family to make irresponsible decisions that will mess up your life. Not even “good Christian girls” are exempt from sexual temptations. Not even you.

What would cause someone like you or your friends to go from saving herself for her Prince Charming to kissing toads? Is it possible to climb out of the toad swamp once you are in it? Is this a war that can even be won? If so, how?

This book answers these questions. It will show you how you can maneuver through the minefield of youth without losing the battle for sexual and emotional integrity. If you can avoid the land mines and be victorious in the battle, you will be more likely to enter your adult years with confidence and purpose. Your life will be free of desperation, and you will make great choices for your future. The world can be yours, but first learn more about the intensity of your own private battle by answering yes or no to the following questions.

1. Do you watch television shows or movies with sexual jokes or graphic sex scenes?

2. Does the music you listen to talk blatantly of sexual desires outside of marriage?
3. Do you ever act overly friendly or seductively* to get a guy's attention?
4. Do thoughts of having or keeping a boyfriend consume your mind to the point that you find it difficult to concentrate on anything else for any length of time?
5. Are you looking for or entertaining the idea of a serious romantic relationship even though it will be several years before you are ready to get married?
6. Do you habitually masturbate to pleasure yourself sexually or as a means of resisting sexual involvement with others?
7. Do you consider oral sex or other sexual activities okay because they're not vaginal sex and you can't get pregnant from them?
8. Do you feel that your virginity has been stolen from you?
9. Do you feel as if you are "damaged goods" that a "respectable guy" wouldn't want?
10. Do you believe it is ever okay for a couple to live together even though they are not married?
11. Do you believe it is ever okay for a couple to have sex before marriage?
12. Have you ever lied to your parents about where you were going or whom you were with because you knew they wouldn't approve if you told the truth?
13. Would you lie to your parents in order to go out with a particular guy you liked a lot if you knew you could get away with it?
14. Have you ever made out with a guy just because it seemed like the thing to do?
15. Are you anxious to get out from under the control of your parents and gain your freedom to pursue any relationship you want?
16. Do you go into Web sites or chat rooms that you know your parents would not approve of?

* *seductively*—in an alluring or sexually tempting manner

17. Have you ever given your phone number or physical address to a stranger you were flirting with over the Internet without your parents' knowledge?
18. Have you set rules or guidelines for your behavior or your relationships that you've already broken?
19. Do you hide certain things, such as steamy love letters, magazines, or videos?
20. Do you envision that getting married someday will be the answer to all of your problems and relieve you of your sexual and emotional temptations?

Which questions did you mark yes? Each one reveals a potential pitfall that makes you more likely to give in to sexual temptation when it arises. Whether you are just entering puberty and new to this struggle or an experienced young adult, you can design a rock-solid defense to avoid becoming a casualty of this war. Whether you are sexually pure, hanging on to your virginity by a thread, or sleeping with a guy, you can maintain and/or reclaim your sexual integrity not just throughout your youth, but throughout your whole life. Recognizing and understanding what kind of things can cause every woman, regardless of her age or marital status, to stumble and fall into sexual temptation is the key. By learning to guard your mind, heart, and body against sexual compromise and understanding God's plan for your sexual and emotional fulfillment, you can maneuver your way through your teenage years with grace...and without regrets.

As you begin to understand this gift of sexuality more fully, you will be able to dispel some of the myths that can keep you entrenched in this battle. The coming chapters will help you

- understand the complexity of your sexuality and what part your emotions play in the battle;
 - recognize the myths about sexuality that dominate our culture and how they can affect your sexual beliefs and choices;
 - embrace sexual purity as a preferred lifestyle, not just physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually as well;
 - enjoy healthy, satisfying relationships with yourself, God, and others;
 - find the love that you are looking for without looking in the wrong places or placing unrealistic expectations on your boyfriend or future husband;
- and

- feel good about yourself not just for a moment but for the rest of your life.

If you have been successful in overcoming temptations thus far, praise God for His protection, and prepare for further victory. If you have given in to any of these temptations, if you wonder why you feel so disconnected from God, or if you feel anxious about your present or future relationships, this book could be your pathway to peace.

Our prayer is that you will find wisdom, courage, hope, and strength to face *and win* the battle for sexual and emotional integrity.

He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

Proverbs 2:7-11

back to the blueprints for sexuality

So God created man in his own image...male and female he created them.... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

GENESIS 1:27,31

If someone were to ask you, “What is sex?” how would you respond? If you are like most people, you might blush and hem and haw until you manage to speak the words “penis” and “vagina” and explain the mechanics of how babies are made. As surprised as you may be to hear this, that answer is incorrect. You just defined *sexual intercourse*.

Think we’re just being picky about the choice of words here? Well, the last time you filled out a form at school and saw the word *sex* with a blank line next to it, did you write “virgin” (or “nonvirgin”)? Of course you didn’t! You wrote “female.” God created us all to be sexual beings, either male or female. Our femininity or masculinity is an expression of who we are. We are sexual beings from the time we are conceived until we die and leave our earthly bodies for our heavenly home. You were sexual when you dressed your Barbie dolls, when you started shaving your legs, and when you cried over your first broken heart. As a matter of fact, you are being *sexual* right now as you read this book! Surprised? Believe us when we say you don’t have to be engaged in sexual activity to be sexual. You are a sexual human being all the time, and that’s something you cannot change.

However, your sexuality may not be fully integrated* into the rest of your per-

* *integrated*—formed or blended into a whole

sonality. You may have compartmentalized* your sexuality because you are ashamed of it or uncomfortable with it. If so, you might be very responsible at school and church, but when you are with a guy, you almost turn into another person. Your discomfort, insecurity, secrecy, or shame might lead you to impulsive† and irresponsible behavior. We want to help you integrate your sexuality so that you become a consistent, confident, whole, and healthy sexual person.

Upon hearing that you are a sexual person, you might think, *Well, if God made me to be a sexual being, He must intend for me to have sex!* But you are confusing being *sexual* with being *sexually active*. The two are *not* the same thing. By God's design we are sexual (male or female) all our lives, but His perfect plan only allows for sexual intercourse within the boundaries of a marriage relationship.

Or you might mistakenly believe, *Once I have sex, I'll be a woman. Until then, I'm still a girl.* Our society has almost made the act of sexual intercourse into a rite of passage into adulthood. It's not. In fact, that's complete nonsense.

Think about it. If a ten-year-old girl has sex, does that make her a woman? Statistically speaking, only 80 percent of women will ever marry, so does that mean the 20 percent who stay single remain girls rather than women? Does the fact that an adult has never had sex make that person any less of a man or a woman? Of course not. Having sex doesn't make you a man or a woman any more than standing in a garage holding a flower vase makes you a Volkswagen Beetle. In other words, your sexuality is defined not by *what you do*, but by *who you are*. By God's design, your female sexuality differs distinctly from a male's sexuality.

VIVE LA DIFFÉRENCE! (FRENCH FOR “CELEBRATE THE DIFFERENCE!”)

When I brought my newborn son home from the hospital, it did not take long for my three-year-old daughter to declare, “Mommy! I don't have a penis!” The difference between our physical bodies is only the beginning of the differences

* *compartmentalized*—separated into different categories

† *impulsive*—acting momentarily without thought to consequences

between males and females. Understanding these differences is vital to guarding your sexual purity and helping others do the same.

Perhaps a trip back to the Garden of Eden will help.

Imagine Adam and Eve in the garden. God gives them the command, “Be fruitful and increase in number” (Genesis 1:28). This was a two-part command: have sex and make babies.

Now if Adam was so much like Eve that all he wanted to do was walk in the garden holding hands with his wife, pick flowers, and share his innermost thoughts and feelings, would they have ever gotten around to having sex? Probably not.

But God placed in Adam an ability to be turned on simply at the sight of Eve’s extraordinary beauty so that he would want to obey God’s command to “multiply and increase in number.” One look at her feminine figure and he thought, *Whoa, Baby! Come to Papa!*¹

God gave men the incredible responsibility of being the progenitors* of the human race (sounds like the title of an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie, doesn’t it?). To equip man for such an enormous task, God placed in him exactly what he would need in order to fulfill his responsibility: the desire to be physically intimate and experience pleasure. A man longs to reach out and touch, fondle, embrace, and expel all his energies making love with the object of his affection.

Ever since Adam first laid eyes on Eve, males have been very stimulated by what they take in through their eyes. When visually stimulated, a guy’s sperm[†] production kicks into high gear, boosting his craving for physical touch to levels which can make him feel very out of control. However, with God’s help every male can learn to control these sexual desires and prove that he is a man, not just a male animal.

Now if all Eve wanted to do was chase Adam and have sex, work in the fields, arm wrestle, and play football, would she have raised healthy, well-balanced, sensitive children? Probably not. (Never mind what her son Cain turned out like, just go along with me!)

But God placed in Eve the desire to be emotionally connected and involved in

* *progenitor*—forefather or originator

† *sperm*—reproductive cells produced in a male’s testicles that can fertilize the female egg and result in pregnancy.

caring for and nurturing others. God wanted her to obey His command to “be fruitful” or to “make grow.” He gave her, and all females, the responsibility of being the nurturers of the human race, and He placed in her exactly what she would need to fulfill that responsibility: the desire to be emotionally intimate. A woman is made to cradle, caress, converse with, and care for the object of her affection.

So while young men are primarily aroused by what they see with their eyes, as a young woman you are more aroused by what you hear and feel. The temptation to look at pornography can be overwhelming to a guy, but you may be more likely to read a romance novel or go gaga over a rock star. A male may fantasize about watching a woman undress, but you would be more likely to fantasize about a guy whispering sweet nothings in your ear while touching you gently. A male wants to look and touch, while you would prefer to relate and connect emotionally.

While a guy gets tempted sexually because of what he sees, you are more likely to be tempted sexually because your heart is crying out for someone to satisfy your innermost desires to be loved, needed, valued, and cherished. While a guy also needs mental, emotional, and spiritual connection, his physical needs tend to be in the driver’s seat and his other needs ride along in the back. The reverse is true for you. A young woman’s emotions are usually in the driver’s seat. That’s why it’s said that guys *give love to get sex* and girls *give sex to get love*. Sadly, we know of many girls who had sex when all they really wanted was someone to hold them. We want you to know that sex outside of marriage will never bring you the love and acceptance you want, but with God’s help you can find fulfillment and satisfaction in healthy ways.

In addition, a male can enjoy the act of sex without committing his heart or bonding spiritually with the object of his physical desire. This is the ultimate act of compartmentalization, and guys are masters at it. Never assume a guy feels what you feel.

A healthy young female, on the other hand, usually gives her body only to someone she thinks of night and day and with whom her heart and spirit have already connected (unless there is dysfunctional or addictive behavior involved). And when she gives her mind, heart, and soul, her body usually follows right behind them. The four are intricately connected.

Every Young Man’s Battle, which Steve coauthored with Fred Stoeker, discusses how important it is for guys to “bounce” their eyes (immediately look away at

something else) to avoid looking at a woman lustfully. While you also need to guard your eyes (women can be visually stimulated as well), your primary concern needs to be guarding your heart and “bouncing” your thoughts (immediately turning your thoughts away from the temptation to focus on something else).

Figure 2.1 shows a quick recap of the differences we’ve just discussed.

Later on we’ll talk about some other differences between guys and girls, but for now the most important thing for you to understand is that God created males and females to be very different. Yet as different as we are, we fit together perfectly.

CREATED FOR CONNECTION

Part of God’s perfect plan is that we are so physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually drawn to the opposite sex that we long for closeness with each other—not just an “I want to sit beside you” closeness, but a deep desire to be intimately connected.

Intimacy can best be defined by breaking the word into its syllables: “in-to-me-see.” The longing for connection with the opposite sex is a longing to be seen and accepted for who we really are deep down inside, as well as to see the other person deep inside so that we truly know each other. As a matter of fact, according to Webster’s dictionary, one of the definitions of the word *know* is “to have sexual intercourse with.”

God designed the male and female bodies so that the penis fits perfectly inside the vagina during the act of sexual intercourse. But sexual intercourse was not intended to be just a *physical* connection. God designed sexual intercourse to be shared between two bodies, two minds, two hearts, and two spirits that unite to become a one-flesh union. When this level of intimacy is experienced within the commitment and safety of a loving marriage, it can be one of the most earthshaking and fulfilling experiences you’ll ever know this side of heaven. God wants you to enjoy sex, and that is why He gave you a body part, the clitoris,* that has no other purpose but to give you sexual pleasure. Yay, God!

* *clitoris*—a small organ located toward the front of the vaginal area which provides pleasure when aroused or stimulated

PERFECTLY DESIGNED TO BE WORTH THE WAIT

Amazing, isn't it? Our God designed males and females to fit together perfectly, to long for emotional connection with one another, and to be stimulated and aroused by the sights, sounds, and even smells of one another. He loves us so much that He designed every fiber of our being to want to fulfill His commandment to be fruitful and multiply. He created the act of sexual intimacy as a means to provide men and women with physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual pleasure beyond description.

So if sex is so wonderful, why shouldn't you be allowed to engage in sexual activity as soon as you feel ready? as soon as you experience the longing for intimacy and closeness? as soon as your hottie radar goes off?

Because God's perfect plan is that you enjoy sexual intercourse exclusively within marriage. As much as God knows the pleasures of sex and the bonding that can take place when a couple engages in it, He also knows the painful consequences of sex outside of marriage—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual consequences that you'll read about throughout this book—and He wants to protect you from those. The great sex you and your husband will enjoy someday will be free from painful consequences or guilt—and well worth the wait!

Imagine what it is like when two sexually pure people get married. He has guarded his heart and bounced his eyes, and she is the only naked woman he has ever seen. Can you imagine how hot she would be to him? And she has never been held so intimately that she knows the smell of any man's skin but his. She has no

| GUYS | GIRLS |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • driven by their physical desires • crave physical intimacy • stimulated by what they see • give love to get sex • body can disconnect from mind, heart, and spirit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • driven by their emotional desires • crave emotional intimacy • stimulated by what they hear and feel • give sex to get love • body, mind, heart and spirit intricately connected |

Figure 2.1

one to compare his gentle touch and caress to. Can you imagine how hot he would be to her? They can have guilt-free sex however many times in whatever way they want until they die. Now that is what God wants sex to be. No comparison. No disappointment. No guilt or shame. Only good, clean fun between husband and wife.



For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Genesis 2:24-25

building lives of sexual integrity

Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love.

JUDE 20-21

On an episode of the sitcom *My Wife and Kids*, Michael (Damon Wayans) and Janet (Tisha Campbell-Martin) argue about whether to allow their teenage daughter to go out on her first date with a particular young man. Michael says to his wife, "I just don't want this boy to cross the line with my daughter."

His wife asks, "What line?" to which he responds, "The panty line!"

Unfortunately, the panty line is exactly where too many young women envision sexual integrity to stop and compromise to start. But is the panty line really where compromise begins? Obviously, we don't think so.

INTEGRITY VS. COMPROMISE

In the previous chapter we discussed how God created us to be sexual beings and that He intends for sex to be shared and enjoyed only within the marriage relationship. With that in mind, we're ready to talk about sexual integrity. To be a person of integrity means that you are undivided—that all parts of your life line up with the other parts. People who believe in Jesus Christ and claim to be Christians will strive to live a life that lines up with all of Jesus' teachings. When successful in living such a life, they display integrity.

If you think being a person of sexual integrity means that you are a boring, frigid young woman who never has any fun with a guy, nothing can be further from the truth. A young woman of sexual integrity is free to enjoy the excitement

and fun of a romantic relationship without all the worry that compromise brings into our lives.

Compromise is the opposite of integrity. It leads you to do things that take your mind and heart away from Christ. It usually begins in small ways but eventually blossoms into big-time sin that controls you.

So if you want to live a life of sexual integrity, you will be undivided in your devotion to sexual purity, refusing to be controlled by your sexual passions. When you exercise self-control, you will be free to share yourself completely with your husband in a passionate sexual relationship without the scars and emotional baggage that can come with compromise. Just think how much your husband will love that you saved your sexual pleasures especially for him and that you can love him with reckless abandon, not just with your body, but also your mind, heart, and soul.

TABLETOP SEXUALITY

To better understand the meaning of sexual integrity, think of your sexuality as a table. Just as a table is comprised of four legs that give it balance, our sexuality is also comprised of four distinct components that bring balance to our lives. If one of the legs of a table is missing or broken, the table easily loses its balance and becomes a slide instead.

“By reading this book I’ve had my eyes opened to the fact that girls have their own sexual struggles just like guys do. I’ve never realized the difficulties girls have in guarding their hearts, so hopefully I’ll stop and think about that when I’m tempted to flirt with them in the future.”

—JOHN

My friends Kevin and Ruth discovered this concept at their wedding reception. A long lace-covered banquet table displayed the beautiful multitiered wedding cake, the crystal punch bowl and cups, sterling silverware, and froufrou monogrammed napkins. The only problem was that whoever set up the table had forgotten to fasten the latch on one of the folding legs. As soon as the red punch was poured into the crystal punch bowl, the leg buckled and everything slid down

to the end of the table and onto the floor with a clatter! The cake toppled into the pool of red punch and the napkins were soaked. Everyone looked to the bride and groom, expecting shock and horror. To everyone's delight, however, Kevin and Ruth broke out into hysterical laughter!

But it's no laughing matter when one of the legs of your sexuality buckles, because then your life can become a slippery slope leading to discontentment, sexual compromise, self-loathing, and emotional brokenness. When this happens, God's blessing, intended to bring richness and pleasure to your life, feels more like a curse that brings great pain and despair.

As we mentioned, your sexuality is comprised of four distinct aspects: the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of your being. These four parts combine to form the unique individual God designed you to be. Again, your sexuality isn't *what you do*. Your sexuality is *who you are*, and you are made with a body, mind, heart, and spirit, not just a body. So, sexual integrity is not just about remaining physically abstinent. It is about purity in all four aspects of your being—body, mind, heart, and spirit. When all four aspects line up perfectly, your “tabletop” (your sexuality) reflects balance and integrity.

UNIDENTIFIED SLIPPERY SLOPES

Many young women would call themselves sexually pure simply because they've never had sexual intercourse or because they've never let a guy go beyond their panty line. Are they correct? Consider these questions:

- Perhaps you have never kissed a boy, but you look at pornography, read steamy romance novels, or listen to sexually suggestive music and mentally fantasize about fooling around or going all the way with someone you are not married to. Can you honestly say that you are living a life of sexual integrity? (This is an example of mental compromise.)
- Perhaps you are a “physical virgin,” but have repeatedly used guys to try to get the affirmation you crave. Can it be said that you are living a life of sexual integrity? (This is an example of emotional compromise.)
- Perhaps you wear a True Love Waits ring or necklace, but the only reason you go to youth group is to scope out the cute guys, not to know God

better. Can you sincerely say you have your priorities straight? (This is an example of spiritual compromise.)

- Maybe you've never had intercourse, but you've allowed a guy to put his hand up your shirt or you've given a guy a hand job* or a blow job.† Can you honestly say that you are still sexually pure? (This is an example of physical compromise.)

In order to experience the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual stability that God intends for you to have, you must avoid turning your tabletop into a slippery slope through some sort of compromise. If you are wondering how to accomplish this, rest assured that by the time you get to the end of this book, you will have the answers.

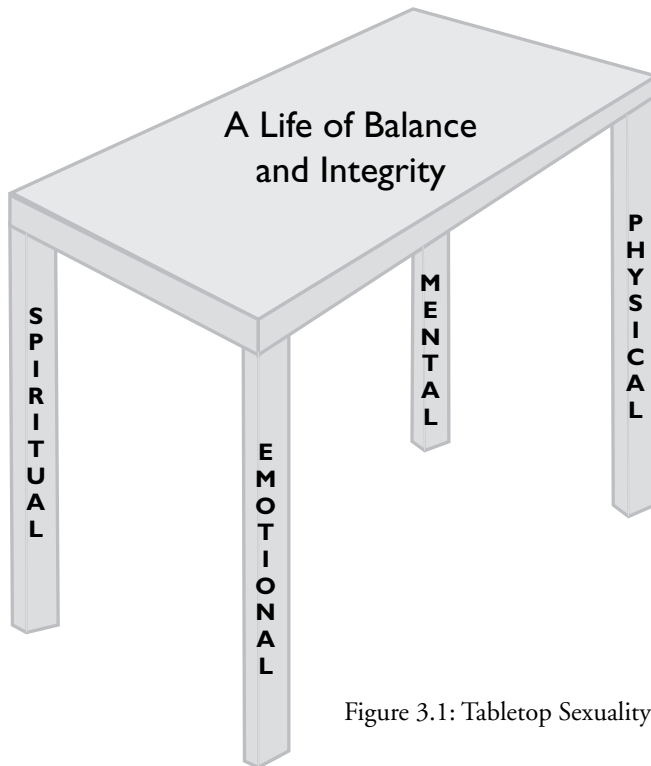


Figure 3.1: Tabletop Sexuality

* *hand job*—slang term for massaging a male's penis with your hand

† *blow job*—slang term for a female performing oral sex on a male

Until you are married, sexual integrity means protecting yourself from any physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual longings for the opposite sex that cannot be fulfilled according to God's plan. It means looking to God to satisfy these needs until they can be fulfilled in a marriage relationship. It doesn't mean you can't be interested in or hopeful of having a husband someday or that you can't date or have a boyfriend. It simply means that you try your best to guard your heart, mind, and body against any compromise that threatens your sexual integrity.

When you marry, sexual integrity will equate to intimately connecting physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually with your husband and no other man outside your marriage. Any compromise whatsoever—physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual—will affect your sexual integrity as a whole. One infected part will eventually infect all of its corresponding parts or, at the very least, rob you of the sexual wholeness and fulfillment that God longs for you to have.

LEGALISM VS. LOVE

When it comes to sexual integrity, most people want a list of dos and don'ts, cans and can'ts, shoulds and shouldn'ts. They want to know: *What can I get away with? How far can I go? What's too far?* However, a list of laws about what we can and can't wear, should and should not do and say, and so on, isn't the best answer, because these guidelines only address our physical actions. But what about our motivations and thoughts when we select our clothes or choose what behaviors are appropriate or inappropriate in a relationship? You need a standard of sexual integrity that will address not just physical behaviors, but emotional and mental behaviors as well. How can we develop a set of rules that will cover our minds, hearts, *and* bodies?

The answer lies not in legalism, which is defined as "abiding by a set of strict laws," but in Christian love. God boiled the many rules and regulations set out in the Old Testament down to just ten commandments. Then in the New Testament, Jesus reduced all those laws down to only two. If you live by these two commandments, you will live a life of sexual integrity.

These two laws are explained when Jesus responded to the question, Which is the greatest commandment?

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:37-40)

Jesus was saying that the law isn't what is important—love is. If you love God, love your neighbor, and love yourself (in that order), then you can live far above any set of rules or regulations. When you live by the spirit of love, you are free from any legalistic standards.

Paul echoed this form of “freedom with responsibility” when he wrote:

“Everything is permissible”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible”—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. (1 Corinthians 10:23-24)

Paul was saying, “You can do most anything, but it isn't always in your best interest or in the interest of others. Focus not on what is ‘allowed,’ but on what is best for all involved.” How does this apply to sexual integrity?

Pick any issue and sift it through this law vs. love filter:

- There is no law against flattering clothes, but is your motive in wearing them to build others up or to build up your own ego by turning a guy's head?
- We have freedom of speech in this country, but are the things you say to guys in their best interest or are your words merely a tool to manipulate them into giving you the attention you crave?
- The Bible doesn't prohibit French kissing, but is it a loving thing to do to get a guy's juices flowing (not to mention your own), awakening sexual desires that shouldn't be satisfied outside of marriage?

Look beyond the movements to the motivations behind your actions. By doing this, you no longer have to concern yourself with the law because you are acting by a higher standard, a standard of love. The columns of Figure 3.2, comparing questions of compromise to questions of integrity, show the difference between evaluat-

ing your motives and behaviors through the lens of legalism vs. evaluating them through the lens of love.

God holds each of us accountable to do what we know to do. If you want to be a young woman of sexual integrity, you may need to let go of some of your freedoms (in dress, thoughts, speech, and behavior) in order to serve the best interest of others out of love. Not only will God provide this knowledge of how to act with integrity, He will also honor you if you apply this knowledge and act with responsibility.

A YOUNG WOMAN OF SEXUAL AND EMOTIONAL INTEGRITY

Let's put this all together. If you want to be a young woman of sexual and emotional integrity, make sure that your thoughts, words, emotions, and actions reflect an inner beauty and a sincere love for God, others, and yourself. Not that you will never be tempted to think, say, feel, or do something inappropriate, but you will try diligently to resist these temptations and stand firm in your convictions. You won't use the opposite sex in an attempt to get your emotional cravings met, nor will you entertain sexual fantasies. You won't dress to seek male attention, but you won't limit

| QUESTIONS OF COMPROMISE <i>Don't Ask</i> | QUESTIONS OF INTEGRITY <i>Do Ask</i> |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are my actions lawful? • Will anyone find out? • Would anyone condemn me? • Is this socially acceptable? • Are my clothes too revealing? • How can I get what I want? • Can I get away with saying this? • Will this hurt anyone? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are my actions loving to others? • Is this something I'd be proud of? • Is this my highest standard? • Is this in line with my convictions? • Am I dressing for attention? • What is my motive for wanting this? • Would this be better left unsaid? • Will this benefit others? |

Figure 3.2

your wardrobe to ankle-length skirts and turtleneck sweaters, either. You'll dress fashionably and look sharp and maybe even appear sexy to a guy (like beauty, "sexy" is in the eye of the beholder, and some guys will think you look sexy even when you dress modestly), but your motivation won't be self-seeking or seductive. You will present yourself as an attractive young woman because you know you represent God to others.

Your life will line up with your lip. If you claim to be a follower of Christ, you won't disregard His many teachings on sexual immorality, lustful thoughts, immodest dress, and inappropriate talk. You will live what you believe about God, and your beauty will shine from the inside out. Finally, you will have an incredible hope for your future marriage—that it will be everything God intended for it to be, especially the passionate sexual relationship you and your husband will be able to enjoy.

If you are ready to discover more about how you can live a life of sexual integrity, guarding not just your body but your mind and heart as well, keep reading as we dispel some of the myths that can keep you entrenched in this battle.



Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

Matthew 7:24-27