

Jill Page



Question: *If my child is going to have sex, shouldn't I give him/her a condom? At least that way pregnancy won't be an issue and he/she will be protected from STDs.*

Answer: It's hard to be a teen today. The messages our culture sends are destructive. "Sex is no big deal. Everybody's doing it. No one will care. If you really loved me, you'd do it. Come on, it'll be great." Teens are warned to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) by using condoms and other methods of birth control. Our culture has misidentified the problem as the consequences of sex, rather than sex outside marriage. Thus many have engaged in pre-marital sex and suffered physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Acknowledging only the physical risks, people now talk about using "protection" (condoms). Sex has become something to fear, something from which one needs to be protected. How sad. God designed sex to be a beautiful part of a marriage relationship. By trying to get the physical pleasure without the responsibility and commitment of marriage, we have taken God's precious gift and degraded it.

It is crushing for parents to learn that their child is sexually active. Parents see the myriad forms of suffering brought by sexual sin. In addition to the hopes that are dashed and the concern over sin, parents fear that their child will face pregnancy, STDs, or abortion. It is natural to want to spare your child pain. Some think that by giving their child condoms, birth control pills, etc., they can at least prevent some of the consequences of sex outside marriage. If parents have communicated that saving sex for marriage is the biblical norm and their expectation, giving that child a condom can give several messages never intended by the parents. The child may think: 1) my parents expect me to keep having sex, that I can't or won't stop; 2) saving sex for marriage must not

be all that important; or 3) this condom will protect me. Obviously, condoms will not prevent sexual sin. They can do nothing to protect the emotions or relationships. Their failure rate in preventing pregnancy is about 15%. Even if you could get teens to use condoms consistently and correctly, they *reduce* (not eliminate) the risk of only some STDs. As an example, they do little if anything to prevent the spread of human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV is the most common STD and causes genital warts in men and women. It is also the cause of more than 90% of all cancer of the cervix.

So what can a parent do? 1) Don't provide condoms or other birth control. 2) Let your children know that you love them and nothing will change that. If your child does get involved sexually, it is important that he or she feel safe in coming to tell you. Then you can make sure they get tested and treated for STDs, seek forgiveness, and make wise plans to avoid further sexual sin. 3) Pray with and for them. Hearing your prayers can teach them how to pray in these areas, demonstrate the depth of your love for them, show them you understand what they face, and help them feel protected as they step out into a world of temptations and pressures. 4) Talk with them. Provide them with information. Help them to understand that the risks are so great (spiritually, physically, emotionally) that you cannot give them birth control. Be willing to spend as much time as they need to talk it through. 5) Show them the blessings of a committed marriage relationship so that they believe an enduring, faithful, loving marriage is possible. 6) Explain the gospel, that Christ is eager to forgive their sexual sin and make them pure. Challenge them to trust God, to believe that His plan of sex within marriage is part of His desire to give them His very best and protect them from harm. 7) Help them to see that God is bigger than the pressures they face today, that His love is more valuable than the love of someone who threatens to leave if sex is not part of the relationship. God can enable them to *avoid* situations known to be tempting, and to *handle* in a godly way situations that can't be avoided.

*Jill Page is the director of Education at the Urban Family Council located in Pennsylvania.



Question: *What if you get married and he/she doesn't satisfy you, i.e., the sex isn't good between you?*

Answer: My answer to this question will seem quite broad. That is because I believe this question is based on several underlying misconceptions that need to be addressed.

You do not need to practice sex before marriage to see if it will be good after marriage. People are not objects; we're not clothes that need to be tried on or cars that need to be test-driven. Your bodies will "fit" together. In marriage you will have a lifetime to learn to give pleasure to each other. Research shows that married people are more satisfied with their sex lives than single people or married people who are having affairs. This makes a lot of sense. Married people have made a commitment to each other. They can relax and enjoy the physical relationship because there is safety in knowing their spouse will stay with them through whatever they face as a couple, "til death do us part." The very things that teens

the marriage. If the marriage is based on sex, that is a very flimsy foundation. If sex is used to solve problems in the marriage, that will not be effective in the long term.

There is more to marriage than sex! In fact, a very small percentage of your time together will actually be spent having sex. Instead of worrying about the sexual relationship, it is much more important for those who are dating to get to know each other as individuals. A mature faith, godly character, a pattern of choosing loving responses in challenging situations, self-control: these are much more important. Anyone can have sex. Not everyone has healthy relationship skills. By choosing a lifestyle of sexual purity, you protect your future marriage. You bring no memories and no comparisons. What you do bring is a precious gift for your spouse: the gift of your virginity. If you have already given that gift to someone, there is hope. You can become a renewed virgin. When you ask Jesus Christ to forgive your past sin, you are completely forgiven. You can now choose a lifestyle of sexual purity, putting wise boundaries into your life so that you do not slide into sexual sin. As you rely on God's strength to enable you to

The physical relationship will express the love that exists in the marriage.

stress over—what if my parents find out, what if I/she get(s) pregnant, what if I get an STD, what will happen to my reputation, how do I compare to the others he/she has been with, what if he/she finds someone prettier/more handsome—are no longer issues. The physical relationship will express the love that exists in

avoid tempting situations, respond appropriately to unavoidable pressures, view others as brothers and sisters, and build godly character into your life, you are preparing well for a faithful, enduring marriage. You have a beautiful gift to bring your spouse on your wedding night.