

What We Teach About Young Girls Purity?

grace church position papers

Raising young girls in a society that is becoming increasingly sexualized is no easy feat, but it is also one that must not be ignored. One need not look much farther than the staggering statistics to see that the issue of sexual integrity for teenagers is of utmost importance. In recent surveys, sixty-five percent of American teens polled admit to having sex before they get out of high school. Fifty-two percent of American women have sex before they turn eighteen. Seventy-five percent of American women have sex before they get married. Sixty-one percent of students who took purity pledges broke their pledge. Thirty-nine percent of the students who kept their pledges engaged in oral sex.

When it comes to the issue of purity most teenagers do not understand why it is important. They could most likely state the obvious reasons given: that sex is supposed to be reserved for marriage and that sex outside of marriage is against God's word. But if you dig beneath their surface answers, most of them don't understand these seemingly old-fashioned ideals. If they are honest, most wonder if Scripture is old, outdated, and irrelevant in this day and age—at least where sex is concerned.

In an effort to help teens remain pure, people often unknowingly misrepresent sex and sexuality. Young girls are often told, whether explicitly or implicitly, that “good girls don't” and that when it comes to men they must “guard their hearts”. Both of these statements give young women the impression that sex is bad and that men are the enemy. These young girls then grow up into self-protective women who are not free to invite their husbands to delight in them sexually. It is true that a young lady must guard her heart—but the enemy is sin. She must guard her heart from lusts, idolatry, pride, autonomy, and the like.

Inherently, most teens know and understand that sex is a good thing. When we attempt to control their surging hormones by inferring that sex is bad, except within the confines of marriage, something about this does not ring true to them—especially when their sexually active peers are talking about it in positive, desirable ways. The truth

is that sex is enjoyable, whether within a marriage or not. What teens don't realize though is that the intimacy they are experiencing in premarital sex is a counterfeit—there is no security to back it up. So while the consequences of premarital sex may not always be felt immediately, they will be realized.

Shaming or scaring teens into purity will never work. If we hope to equip them for a life of sexual integrity, we must be willing to tell them the truth and to regularly engage them in conversation. Christian clichés like “true love waits” simply will not give young girls the power they need to sustain their purity in long seasons of sexual temptation.

So what are we to do? Our goal should not be just to preserve their virginity, but to lead them toward a life of sexual wholeness. In order to do that, we must give them a more robust understanding of God, of themselves, and of sex.

One of the first things we must teach a girl is who she is in light of Scripture.

She was created in the image and likeness of God. She is uniquely equipped to reflect the glory of God in thought, word, and deed and this includes her sexuality. She cannot deny or repress her sexuality. Regardless of whether or not she is engaging in sex, she is a sexual being and everything she does will be done as a woman. She was created to correspond to another, to come alongside and lend strength. As such she has a strong, innate desire to partner with another and to be a source of delight to those with whom she is in relationship. One of the ways she fulfills her calling is through sex. Her desires to be known and loved and to give of herself to another are good, natural, God-given desires. However, she must learn to express these desires appropriately in each season of her life.

We must also teach young women that sexuality is powerful and God has entrusted women with this power.

Just like the parable of the servant and the talents,

women are responsible for how we use this power. This power can be wielded for good or for harm. As she engages men in relationships, whether platonic or not, she can do so in a way that either invites and empowers him to take responsibility and be a man, or in a way that enables him to be passive and remain a boy.

All throughout the book of Proverbs, young men are warned about the worldly seductress who woos him with her beauty, speech, and desirous ways—but in the end her ways lead to destruction. The road of the worldly woman always results in death. The implications of premarital sex go far beyond STD's, unplanned pregnancies, or bad reputations. The death we experience from sexual sin is often spiritual, relational, and/or emotional scarring, that though redeemable, will remain in varying degrees until Jesus' return and the glorification of our bodies.

God has entrusted women with the power to embolden, encourage, affirm, and bring life to men through the act of sex. Sex is life-giving to a husband in a way that helps him feel more confident and capable. A woman who entrusts herself to her husband—body, mind, and soul—communicates to him that he is respected, trusted, and valued in a way that no one and nothing else can. A woman who understands this and respects the power she holds and stewards it wisely will be a source of life for her husband, as well as herself.

We must also teach them that sexuality cannot and should not be divorced from her faith; how she stewards sex and sexuality, how she expresses herself sexually reflects what she believes about God.

Sex was God's idea; He created it, and it is good. However, God assigned very specific boundaries with regard to sex—that it is to be between one man and one woman. Sex is not just an inconsequential act performed with our body; it is a physical symbol of a covenant made before God. Just as baptism is a physical, tangible symbol of our new life in Christ and the Lord's Supper is a physical, tangible symbol of our redemption through His body and blood, sex is a physical, tangible symbol of our marital covenant. It is a unifying act.

Even our physical makeup affirms God's original design. When a couple engages in sex, the hormone oxytocin is released. This is the same hormone that is released when a mother nurses her baby. The purpose of oxytocin is to create a bond between the two parties. When this bond is broken, the result is soul tearing. Because sex is so

powerful, the Lord created these boundaries to protect us.

Anything outside of God's original design results in brokenness, pain, and consequences that we were never intended to experience. The lie that Eve believed in the garden is that God was withholding good from her. She saw the fruit of the tree as good for food, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for wisdom. She doubted God's goodness; she doubted His character; she doubted His boundaries; and then she chose to trust herself instead. In pride and unbelief, she acted autonomously—stepping outside of His protective boundaries. This exposed her prideful heart and her desire to be in control of her own life. The result was death, destruction, shame, and despair. Like the fruit, sex is good, pleasing, and desirable, but to engage in it outside of the boundaries God set forth, is acting in pride and unbelief and the consequences we reap will be just as destructive as Eve's.

Finally, we must teach young women that purity is more than just behavior; it is an attitude.

To have sexual integrity, we must incorporate our whole being. Morality alone isn't sufficient. That is simply keeping the outside of the cup clean, while the inside is still dirty; it is a form of godliness with no power. Sexuality is an issue of discipleship. What we do with our bodies reflects what we believe about God. Living with sexual integrity is honoring God with our bodies and serving others in love. Our highest goal is not preserving virginity; it is worship, obedience, and service.

For more resources on this topic:

Real Sex by Lauren Winner

Sex and The Soul of a Woman by Paula Rhinehart
Grace Church Ezer Study

Grace Church: A Conversation About Sexuality