

“Help Me Stop Verbal Abuse of My Boyfriend”

Sue Bohlin

I am in a relationship with a wonderful man but I am [verbally abusive](#) to him. I become easily frustrated and angry with him when he doesn't know how to get somewhere or when we can't agree on what to eat. I seem to make him feel stupid and not wanted because we have different educational backgrounds. I hate that I am destroying his spirit and, in turn, destroying mine. I know I am verbally abusive but I am having such a hard time stopping and keeping my mouth shut. I don't want to even think the way I do.... I just want to change and love him deeply because now I am just snide and mean.

I am a Christian and a.) I know this is wrong; b.) I want to change, and; c.) I want this relationship to work because he is a sweet, gentle, kind man, marriage material. Do you have any suggestions as to what I can do? I already see a therapist.

The fact that you are aware you are being so unloving and destructive in your relationship is the most important first step to changing it. Good for you!

What occurs to me is that deeply profound truth the Lord Jesus said: “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.” What comes out of your mouth is generated from what's in your heart. Which sounds like [bluntness warning ON] pridefulness, disrespect and self-centeredness fruits of the flesh (see also Galatians 5:19-21).[bluntness warning OFF] I think the problem isn't as much your behavior, but a heart desperately in need of transformation by Jesus. (Please understand: there isn't a single one of us who doesn't desperately need a heart transformation! I was recently asked, “What's your best evidence for the existence of God?” I replied, “He changed my whole life!”)

I'm glad to hear you're a Christian, since your heart issues can be solved by cooperating with the Lord in the sanctification process. And that is usually a process of Him:

- 1. Convicting us of sin so we can repent*
- 2. Giving us power to change the way we respond to life's challenges, as we depend on Him to do it*
- 3. Identifying lies we believe, and helping us replace them with the truth*

I suggest that you make a solemn decision to choose humility before the Lord and with your boyfriend. Pray daily about this, asking the Lord to show you your sin from HIS perspective. Ask Him to break your heart over your pride and arrogance so that you will deeply WANT to repent, and will work hard at changing your bad habits.

At the same time, ask your boyfriend for help in changing the habits you are ashamed of. Choose a code word or phrase that he can say when you are being judgmental, impatient, and frustrated. Give him permission to say the code word/phrase, make a solemn promise that you will not get angry and will instead say, "Thank you for helping me get better." (And pre-decide that if your ego rises up in ugliness, you will tell yourself the truth: "You are being unkind, prideful and ugly. Shut up, flesh. I choose love and kindness instead.")

I have learned that when we are easily frustrated and angry, that is usually the result of harboring unrealistic expectations. (I recently came across a word of wisdom on that: "Expectations are the mother of resentments.") When you find yourself erupting in frustration and anger, pre-decide to ask yourself, "What am I believing about this?" It could be unrealistic beliefs such as, "Men should always know how to get anywhere." "Other people should want the same things I want since I know best." "Men should always have education levels higher than or at

least equal to women.” With the Lord’s help, work at being more self-aware about what drives your self-centeredness. Ask Him in your prayer times, “Lord, what do You want me to know about myself? Give me grace to hear what You have to say without being defensive.”

This kind of internal turnaround works best when you “put it on project status,” as Dr. Phil says. You have to make it a primary intention and put a lot of mental and emotional and spiritual energy into it. And every time you think about it, give it back to the Lord and invite His help, confessing your desperate need of Him to make you more Christlike. He has all the power you need for exactly what you want.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“Is My Husband’s Cybersex Grounds For Divorce?”

Sue Bohlin

My husband has been having cyber sex. Sometimes there was a camera on the other end. Is this biblical grounds for divorce?

Dear _____,

I am so sorry. What a horrible betrayal you are feeling!

I don't know God's definitive answer on this, but I do think that cyber sex and webcams are high-tech ways of extending the sins of lust and fantasy, which are mental and emotional sins . . . but I don't believe they cross the line of adultery. Actual sex between two people has an effect of creating soul-ties to each other that compromises the marriage covenant.

I think the bigger issue is one of hard-heartedness. If you have asked your husband not to engage in cyber sex and to get rid of the camera, and he refuses because he wants what he wants even if it means hurting you, then that's the real issue. What kind of marriage is it if one person makes self-centered choices that insure the other will be hurt?

May I respectfully suggest you read Drs. John Townsend and Henry Cloud's excellent book *Boundaries in Marriage* for some wisdom on what to do next. For example, I have a friend whose husband refuses to stop going to a website where he can play games and chat with other women, and he has fallen into at least emotional affairs with a couple of them. She has said, "As long as you won't get rid of Pogo, you can do your own laundry." This way, his stubbornness and selfishness are costing him something.

Hope you find this helpful. Again, I am so sorry. My heart hurts for you.

Sue Bohlin

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Grappling with Guilt

Rusty Wright

What Makes You Feel Guilty?

What makes you feel guilty?

Has a relationship gone sour and you find yourself agonizing about what might have been if you'd acted or spoken differently? Maybe your slave-driver boss hassles you for being behind. Are your kids wondering why they ended up with you as a parent?

These days, food guilt is common. With super-slim models gracing supermarket tabloids and magazine covers (admit it, now; you've peeked), even a fit, petite-sized former cheerleader can get depressed standing in the checkout line. "No-Guilt Nachos," offers a *Ladies' Home Journal* recipe.

America Online has a special guilt section dealing with "Relationship Guilt," "Parental Guilt," "Food Guilt," "Workforce Guilt," "Pricey Guilt," "I'm-a-Rotten-Person Guilt," "Stay-in-Touch Guilt," and "Trying-to-Please-Everyone Guilt." Whew!

Ever been late paying a family bill due to negligence or overspending? Been unfaithful to your spouse? Lied to the IRS or a friend? Been angry without reason?

When we fall short of our own - or others' - standards, guilt feelings can result. Unresolved guilt can bring anxiety, depression, ulcers, low self-esteem and more.

I am a recovering perfectionist. As a teenager, I could be pretty hard on myself. I once fouled out of a high school basketball game in the final seconds with our team ahead. The opposing player made his free throws, putting his team ahead. I felt bleak. Our team's desperation inbounds pass went to midcourt, where a

teammate caught the ball and threw up a prayer. The ball swished through the net as time expired. We had won. I was the second happiest player there. I probably would have excoriated myself had he missed.

A single man I know became involved with another man's wife. Her rocky marriage had sent her lonely heart wandering and his youthful enthusiasm and libido met many of her wants. They dreamed, schemed, sneaked, and rendezvoused. When discovered, he lied and sought to perpetuate the affair. Eventually, friends convinced him to break things off. He felt guilty for having the fling, guilty for lying about it, and guilty for dumping her.

Feeling guilty can cripple you emotionally. Serious ethical or moral lapses can bring blame and shame. A seemingly minor flaw can sometimes bug the daylight out of you. This article looks at healthy, biblical ways to deal with guilt, and how to know that you are really forgiven.

Some Causes of Guilt Feelings

Why does guilt affect us so, and how can we alleviate it? Some psychologists emphasize that problems in our past can plague us in the present. Inability to reconcile or move past unhealthy relationships with parents, siblings, teachers or classmates may color our emotions. Other authorities feel that people may be following overly rigid standards.

Suggested solutions have included discovering and resolving past hang-ups, relaxing moral codes or easing personal expectations. Certainly many people still suffer from past problems or set unrealistic standards. Forty-eight hours of tasks won't fit into one day, so don't necessarily castigate yourself when only half your ambitious to-do list gets accomplished. If you find yourself sneaking a diet-busting snack, maybe rewarding yourself occasionally is better than whipping yourself. But it seems wise to also consider that, at least in some instances, we may feel guilty because we are guilty.

If this is true, then therapy for a guilty person could begin with getting them to admit their shortcoming. That's not always easy.

Admitting you're wrong can be hard. Perhaps you've heard of the writer who asked his domineering editor if he'd ever been wrong. "Yes," replied the editor. "I was wrong once. It was when I thought I was wrong but I wasn't."

University of Illinois psychologist O. H. Mowrer pointed out a common dilemma in trying to face your own shortcomings:

Here, too, we encounter difficulty, because human beings do not change radically until first they acknowledge their sins, but it is hard for one to make such an acknowledgement unless he has "already changed." In other words, the full realization of deep worthlessness is a severe ego "insult," and one must have a new source of strength to endure it.^{1}

I understand this inner weakness problem. As a teenager, I found success through athletics, academics, and student government. I was attending one of my nation's leading secondary schools. President John F. Kennedy and actor Michael Douglas were alumni. But my achievements didn't bring the personal satisfaction I wanted. Guilt, anxiety, and a poor self-image often plagued me on the inside.

My first year in university, I met some students who said that the spiritual side of life offered a solution to the guilt problem. A relationship with God, they said, could give me the "new source of strength" necessary to face my own flaws and seek help. Because of them, I discovered practical reasons why faith could help me overcome my guilt.

A Solution to Guilt

The hit movie *Bruce Almighty* depicts God's attempts to contact the main character (played by Jim Carrey) by leaving a number on his pager. Turns out the

phone number is valid in many area codes. After the film's release, people and businesses began getting calls from folks asking for God.

A Florida woman threatened to sue the film studio after twenty calls per hour clogged her cell phone. A Denver radio station built a contest around the fluke. Some callers to the station seemed to think they'd really discovered a direct line to God. One even left a message confessing her adultery. [{2}](#)

Owning up to guilt can help clear your conscience.

Those college students I mentioned earlier had a joy and enthusiasm that attracted me. They claimed to have a personal relationship with Jesus of Nazareth. I couldn't believe it all. I kept returning to their meetings because I was curious and because it was a good place to get a date. Especially because it was a good place to get a date!

They explained that God loved me, but that my own self-centeredness or sin had separated me from Him. They said His Son, Jesus, died to pay the penalty for my sins, and rose from the dead so I could receive forgiveness as a free gift. Eventually, it made sense. [{3}](#) Through a simple heart attitude, I invited Jesus to enter my life, forgive me, and become my friend. There was no thunder and lightning, no angels appeared, and I did not become perfect overnight. But I found a new inner peace, freedom from guilt, assurance that I would be with God forever, and the best friend I could ever have.

Of course, my experience is not unique. Harvard psychologist William James, in his classic book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* cites Henry Alline who placed his faith in Christ: "the burden of guilt and condemnation was gone . . . my whole soul, that was a few minutes ago groaning under mountains of death . . . was now filled with immortal love . . . freed from the chains of death and darkness...." [{4}](#)

One early believer wrote: "God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our

sins. He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross." {5} I found that my own guilt was gone, but I also had to draw on His power daily.

A friend of Jesus wrote, "If we confess our sins to him, he [God] is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong." {6} Some call this statement the believer's "bar of soap." We confess, being honest with God. He forgives and cleanses us.

But what if you don't feel forgiven? Is there such a thing as false guilt?

True or False?

A reader who signed his e-mail "Guilt plagued" told me of his struggles:

A few years ago, out of desperation, I made a series of terrible mistakes. I am committed to the Lord and confessed my sins. I'm terribly ashamed and embarrassed about what I have done, and I feel ten times worse because I can't make restitution. . . . I'm having a difficult time processing the idea that He has forgiven me. . . . Please help me . . . what should I do? The guilt is eating me alive.

Sometimes we feel guilty because we are guilty. Other times we feel guilty without cause. Is your guilt true or false, and what can you do about the feelings? {7}

When my wife, Meg, was in graduate school at Stanford, she regularly parked on the street near her campus office. One afternoon she discovered a parking ticket on her windshield. During that day - while she was parked there - campus management had painted the curb red, signifying "No Parking." (The curb had never had paint during her tenure.) Was she guilty?

Her dilemma was both laughable and burdensome. Meg would have to either pay

a fine or go to court. She appeared in court and told the judge what had happened. He dropped the charges. (I should *hope* he would!)

The law and the judge's application of it determined guilt or innocence. Similarly, if we violate God's proscriptions, we stand guilty. If we do not violate biblical principles, then we may or may not be guilty.

If you know your guilt is real, your solution begins with placing your trust in Christ to forgive you. Once you have, and you become aware of sins in your daily life, simply admit them to God.

Keep short accounts with God. As the proverbial country preacher said, "I 'fesses 'em as I does 'em." Feelings may lag behind, but if you've admitted your sin to God, He has forgiven you.

What if you're unsure if your guilt is true or false, or if you confess your sins but still don't feel forgiven?

Consider *the Holy Spirit's guidance*. Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to guide us into truth, [{8}](#) especially concerning sin. [{9}](#) If the Bible doesn't prohibit certain behaviors, you - if you're a follower of Jesus - can ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom about them. Jesus' brother James wrote, "If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask him, and he will gladly tell you." [{10}](#) Discerning God's guidance is not a perfect science, but His inner conviction can help you sort things out.

Making Things Right

What do you do if you're not sure if your guilt feelings are legitimate, or if you don't feel forgiven?

Realize that *God's promises trump your own self-criticism*. Members of God's family can trust His opinion even when they don't feel like it's true. We can "set

our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.” {11} Does your heart condemn you unjustly? You can say, “Listen, heart. I’m a child of God. I’ve confessed my sin and He says I’m forgiven. I refuse to believe your condemnation.”

I recommend that you converse with yourself in private rather than in public! For a variety of psychological and spiritual reasons, your guilt feelings may not disappear immediately. Changing established emotional patterns can take time. Choosing to believe God is good starting point.

Realize also that *God’s promises trump the real enemy*. This may be hard to swallow, but it’s important. Jesus taught the existence of “Satan,” a “liar and the father of lies,” {12} the “accuser” of believers. {13}

I once considered myself too intellectual to believe in Satan. Our university mascot was the “Blue Devil.” To me, the devil was some guy in a blue costume with a pitchfork who ran around at basketball games. Then I heard that Satan the deceiver has some people so deceived that they don’t believe he exists. Jesus’ life and teachings eventually convinced me that Satan was real. If you experience false guilt feelings, realize that they may have a lower source. You needn’t deny the feelings, but you can deny false guilt based on Jesus’ friendship with you. {14}

You may need to *make restitution*. My second year in college, I swiped a plastic bucket from behind the lectern in the psychology lecture hall. It had been there every day during the semester. “No one wants it,” I convinced myself. “It deserves to be taken.” I used it to wash my car.

Two years later, I read a booklet about God’s forgiveness. That bucket kept coming to mind. I not only needed to admit my theft to God. I needed to make restitution.

My booty long since lost, I purchased a new bucket and carried it sheepishly

across campus one afternoon. Finding no one in the psychology building to confess to, I left the bucket in a broom closet with a note of explanation. Maybe a janitor read it. My conscience was clear.

After hearing of this stolen bucket episode in a lecture, one friend wrote his former employer to confess all the items he had stolen and to offer restitution. "We all probably have some plastic buckets in our lives," observed another associate.

Feeling guilty? You may just need to relax unrealistic standards in a stress-filled world. But you also may need to face genuine personal shortcomings. If you do, you can know that the complete forgiveness that Jesus offers is free and that His truth trumps all challengers.

This article is adapted with permission from Rusty Wright, "Grappling with Guilt," *In Touch*, February 2005, pp. 18-20; Copyright © Rusty Wright 2005.

Notes

1. O. H. Mowrer, "Sin, the Lesser of Two Evils," quoted in Henry R. Brandt, *The Struggle for Peace* (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Publications, 1965).
2. Mitch Stacy, "'Bruce Almighty' Phone Number Annoys Many," *Associated Press/AOL News*, May 28, 2003.
3. For detailed information on Jesus and evidence to support His claims, see www.WhoIsJesus-Really.com.
4. *The Life and Journal of the Rev. Mr. Henry Alline* (Boston, 1806), 31-40; selection abridged in Henry James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The Modern Library/Random House, 1936 [original copyright 1902]), 214-215.
5. Colossians 2:13-14 NLT.
6. 1 John 1:9 NLT.
7. For more on false guilt, see, Kerby Anderson, "False Guilt," www.probe.org/false-guilt/ and Sue Bohlin, "It's Not Your Fault!"

www.probe.org/its-not-your-fault/.

8. John 16:13.
9. John 16:8.
10. James 1:5 NLT.
11. 1 John 3:18-20 NIV.
12. John 8:44 NASB.
13. Revelation 12:9-10 NASB.
14. 1 John 4:4 NLT.

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Cool Stuff About Love and Sex

Rusty Wright

Hey, kids. Want to read some cool stuff about love and sex that you might never hear from your folks? Hey, parents. Want to learn how to communicate with your kids about these important topics? Read on!

This article is also available in [Spanish](#).



Cool Stuff

Psst! Hey, kids! Want to hear some really cool stuff about love and sex that you might never hear from your parents? Listen up! (But . . . how about closing your ears for the next few seconds?)

Hey, parents! Want to learn how to talk to your kids about sex in a way they will

understand and relate to? Keep listening. [{1}](#)

OK, kids. You can listen again.

“A fulfilling love life. How can I have one? How can I get the most out of sex?” University students worldwide ask these questions. As I’ve spoken on their campuses, I’ve tried to offer some practical principles because I believe both pleasure and emotional fulfillment are important facets of sex. These principles relate to teens, too. Teens of all ages.

Sex is often on our minds. According to two psychologists at the universities of Vermont and South Carolina, 95% of people think about sex at least once each day. [{2}](#) You might wonder, “You mean that 5% of the people *don’t*?”

Why does sex exist? One of the main purposes of sex is pleasure. Consider what one wise man named Solomon wrote. Writing sometimes in “PG” (but not “R-rated”) terms, he said:

Drink water from your own cistern
And fresh water from your own well.
Should your springs be dispersed abroad,
Streams of water in the streets?
Let them be yours alone
And not for strangers with you.
Let your fountain be blessed,
And rejoice in the wife of your youth.
As a loving hind and a graceful doe,
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
Be exhilarated always with her love. [{3}](#)

Solomon’s ancient love sonnet, the “Song of Solomon,” is one of the best sex manuals ever written. It traces the beauty of a sexual relationship in marriage and is an openly frank description of marital sexual intimacy. You might want to read

it yourself. (Would it surprise you to know that it's in the Bible? You can dog-ear the good parts.)

Another purpose of sex is to develop oneness or unity. Fifteen hundred years before Christ, Moses, the great Israeli liberator, wrote, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." [{4}](#) When two people unite sexually, they "become one flesh."

A third purpose for sex is procreation. That, of course, is how we all got here. You learn that in first year biology, right?

OK, so sex is for pleasure, unity, and procreation. But how can people get the most out of love and sex?

How to Have a Most Fulfilling Love Life

One way not to have a fulfilling love life in marriage is to concentrate solely on sexual technique. There is certainly nothing wrong with learning sexual technique—especially the basics—but technique by itself is not the answer.

The qualities that contribute to a successful sex life are the same ones that contribute to a successful interpersonal relationship. Qualities like love, commitment, and communication.

Consider love. As popular speaker and author Josh McDowell points out, those romantic words, "I love you," can be interpreted several different ways. One meaning is "I love you *if*—If you go out with me . . . if you are lighthearted . . . if you sleep with me." Another meaning is "I love you *because*—because you are attractive . . . strong . . . intelligent." Both types of love must be earned.

The best kind of love is unconditional. It says, "I love you, *period*. I love you even if someone better looking comes along, even if you change, even if you have zoo breath in the morning. I place your needs above my own."

One young engaged couple had popularity, intelligence, good looks, and athletic success that seemed to portend a bright future. Then the young woman suffered a skiing accident that left her paralyzed for life. Her fiancé deserted her.

This true story—portrayed in the popular film, “The Other Side of the Mountain”—was certainly complex. But was his love for her “love, period”? Or was it love “if” or love “because”? Unconditional love (or “less-conditional”, because none of us is perfect) is an essential building block for a lasting relationship.

Unconditional love with caring and acceptance can help a sexual relationship in a marriage. Sex, viewed in this manner, becomes not a self-centered performance but a significant expression of mutual love.

Commitment is also important for a strong relationship and fulfilling sex. Without mutual commitment, neither spouse will be able to have the maximum confidence that the relationship is secure.

Good communication is essential. If a problem arises, couples need to talk it out and forgive rather than stew in their juices. As one sociology professor expressed it, “Sexual foreplay involves the ‘round-the-clock relationship.’” [\[5\]](#)

Why Wait?

After I’d spoken in a human sexuality class at Arizona State University, one student said, “You’re talking about sex within marriage. What about premarital sex?” He was right. I was saying that sexual intercourse is designed to work best in a happy marriage and recommending waiting until marriage before experiencing sex.

This view is, of course, very controversial. You may agree with me. Or you may think I am from another planet, and I respect your right to feel that way. Here’s

why I waited.

First is a moral reason. According to the perspective I represent, the biblical God clearly says to wait.^{6} Some people think that God wants to make them miserable. Actually, He loves us and wants our best. There are practical reasons for waiting.

Premarital sex can detract from a strong relationship and a fulfilling love life. Too often, it's merely a self-gratifying experience. After an intimate sexual encounter, one partner might be saying, "I love you" while the other is thinking, "I love it."

Very often premarital sex lacks total, permanent commitment. This can create insecurity. For instance, while the couple is unmarried, the nagging thought can persist, "If he or she has slept with me, whom else have they slept with?" After they marry, one might think, "If they were willing to break a standard with me before we married, will they with someone else after we marry?" Doubt can chip away at their relationship.

Premarital sex can also inhibit communication. Each might wonder, "How do I compare with my lover's other partners? Does he or she tell them how I perform in bed?" Each may become less open; communication can deteriorate and so can the relationship. Premarital sex can lessen people's chances to experience maximum oneness and pleasure. I'm not claiming that premarital sex eliminates your chances for great sex in marriage. But I am saying that it can introduce factors that can be difficult to overcome.

A recently married young woman told me her perspective after a lecture at Sydney University in Australia. She said, "I really like what you said about waiting. My fiancé and I had to make the decision and we decided to wait." (Each had been sexually active in other previous relationships.) She continued: "With all the other tensions, decisions and stress of engagement, sex would have been just another worry. Waiting 'till our marriage before we had sex was the best decision we ever made."

Wise words. I waited because God said to, because there were many practical advantages, and because none of the arguments I heard for not waiting were strong enough. [{7}](#)

The Vital Dimension

So far we've looked at "Why sex?", "How to have a most fulfilling love life," and "Why wait?". Consider now the vital dimension in any relationship.

Powerful emotional factors can make it difficult for teens to wait until marriage for sexual intercourse or to stop having sex. A longing to be close to someone or a yearning to express love can generate intense desires for physical intimacy. Many singles today want to wait but lack the inner strength or self esteem. They may fear losing love if they postpone sex.

Often sex brings emptiness rather than the wholeness people seek through it. As one TV producer told me, "Frankly, I think the sexual revolution has backfired in our faces. It's degrading to be treated like a piece of meat." The previous night her lover had justified his decision to sleep around by telling her, "There's plenty of me for everyone." What I suspect he meant was, "There's plenty of everyone for me." She felt betrayed and alone.

I explained to her and to her TV audience that sexuality also involves the spiritual. One wise spiritual teacher understood our loneliness and longings for love. He recognized human emotional needs for esteem, acceptance, and wholeness and offered a plan to meet them. His plan has helped people to become brand "new persons" inside. [{8}](#) He promised unconditional love to all who ask. [{9}](#) Once we know we're loved and accepted, we can have greater security to be vulnerable in relationships and new inner strength to make wise choices for safe living. [{10}](#)

This teacher said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." [{11}](#) Millions attest to the safety and security He can provide in relationships. His name, of course, is Jesus of Nazareth. Though I had been a

skeptic, I placed my faith in Him personally my freshman year in college. Through a simple heart attitude, I said, “Jesus, I believe you died and rose again for me. I ask you to enter my life, forgive me, and give me the new life you promised.” He forgave all my flaws—and there were (and are) many of those. He said His own death and resurrection—once I accepted His pardon—erased my guilt.[{12}](#) That was great news!

Marriage with Jesus involved can be like triangle with God at the apex and the two spouses at the bottom corners. As each partner grows closer to God, they also grow closer to each other. Life doesn’t become perfect, but God’s friendship can bring a vital dimension to any relationship.

Parents and Kids

A nationwide survey of teens asked the question, “When it comes to your decisions about sex, who is most influential?” Forty-nine percent of teens responding said it was their parents. The next closest response was “Friends” (16 percent). Eleven percent said the media influenced their decisions about sex the most. Only 5 percent said it was their romantic partner.[{13}](#) Kids, lots of your peers think that it is important to consider how their parents feel about sex.

And teens feel that talking with their parents about sex can make important sexual decisions easier. In a subsequent national survey, teens overwhelmingly expressed that they could more easily postpone sexual activity and avoid getting pregnant if they could only talk about these matters more openly with their folks.[{14}](#)

But there’s a problem. Too many parents are unaware how important what they think about sex is to their teens. Parents often think that their teenagers’ friends are the strongest influence on their teen’s decisions about sex. Yet teens don’t consider their friends as being nearly as influential as parents think they are.[{15}](#)

And mom, you are really, really important!

A major report based on two University of Minnesota studies involving national data found that teens having close relationships with their mothers are more likely than teens lacking close relationships with their mothers to delay first intercourse. The report authors note, “previous studies have shown that mothers tend to have a greater influence than fathers on teens’ sexual decision-making.” [{16}](#)

What can a parent do to help their teens develop positive, healthy sexual attitudes and behavior? Here are some ideas:

- Develop close, loving relationships with your kids from the time they are young.
- Model the types of behavior and attitudes you wish them to emulate.
- Listen to them and treat them with respect.
- Talk about sex, your own values, and why you hold them.
- Help your teen think through their life goals, including education, and how teenage sexual activity might affect their dreams.
- Discuss what types of media are appropriate for your son or daughter to consume.

Making sexual decisions can be hard for teens today. Parents and teens can help each other by becoming close friends and by communicating. It’s not always easy, but the rewards can be significant.

Notes

1. Parts of this article are adapted from Rusty Wright, [“Dynamic Sex: Unlocking the Secret to Love,”](#) Every Student’s Choice, 1996 and Rusty Wright, [“Safe Sex?”](#), Cross & Crescent LXXXI:4, Winter 1994-95, pp. 19-21.
2. Kathleen Kelleher, “Entertaining Fantasies? Don’t Worry, Everyone’s Doing It,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 15, 1995, E1. She cites Harold Leitenberg of the University of Vermont and Kris Henning, “now at the University of South Carolina Medical School”.

3. Proverbs 5:15-19 NASB.
4. Genesis 2:24 NASB.
5. Emily Dale, Ph.D., Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, Illinois, 1975.
6. 1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3.
7. For a summary of arguments for premarital sex, with responses, see Wright, "Dynamic Sex: Unlocking the Secret to Love," op. cit.
8. 2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT.
9. John 3:16; 13:34-35; 17:20, 23, 26; 1 John 4:7-21, 5:14-15.
10. Acts 1:8; Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:16-24; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20.
11. John 8:32 NASB.
12. Luke 24:44-47; Colossians 2:12-14.
13. "Faithful Nation: What American Adults and Teens Think About Faith, Morals, Religion, and Teen Pregnancy," The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, September 2001, p. 5;
<http://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/data/pdf/keeping.pdf>.
14. "With One Voice 2002: America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy," The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, December 2002, pp. 2, 26, 27;
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This article is adapted with permission from Rusty Wright, "Cool Stuff About Love and Sex," *The Plain Truth*, January/February 2004, pp. 17-19.

Trash Your Marriage in Eight Easy Steps - A Christian Perspective

Sue Bohlin

Sue Bohlin helps us take a biblical perspective on eight activities and attitudes that will tear down our marriage. Fortunately, she also provides us eight Christian alternatives that will help build up our marriages.

The divorce rate is at an all-time high, and marriages are falling apart everywhere you look. Marriages of church-going people are crashing and burning especially fast. There are forces in our culture that contribute to marriage stresses such as pornography, the prevalence of drivenness, two-career families, and the dynamics of the blended family. But people also make foolish choices to destroy their marriages from within.

Talking about the family, Proverbs 14:1 says, “The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.” Ephesians 5:28 exhorts husbands to love their wives as their own bodies, nourishing and cherishing them. God’s plan is that we treasure and cultivate our marriages, but it’s very easy to trash them instead. Let’s take a tongue-in-cheek look at eight ways that people trash their marriages.

Be Selfish

The first step is to *be selfish*. My pastor once said that the AIDS of marriage is justified self-centeredness. Everything needs to revolve around you because, let’s face it, you *are* at the center of the universe, right? If you find something you like to do that ignores your spouses’ feelings and interests, go ahead and do it! Too

bad if they don't like it! You only go around once in life, so grab for all the gusto you can get!

Always insist on having things your own way. If you don't get your own way, throw a tantrum. Or freeze your spouse out. Get your kids involved in this game by saying things like, "Would you please ask your father to pass the salt?" Don't be afraid to withhold sex if your spouse isn't letting you have things your own way. There's a *lot* of power in that, so don't waste it!

If there's only enough money in your budget for what one of you wants, make sure you get what *you* want. Especially if you're the wage earner, or if you make more than the other. Money is power, and don't be afraid to use it against your spouse!

Make demands instead of requests. Wives, let your husband know that he *will* do things your way, or you'll make his life miserable. Husbands, when you want your wife to do something, just *tell* her to do it. "Please" and "thank you" are for the kids. This is your spouse you're talking about—they don't need it. Save all your courtesy for strangers; don't waste it on the person you said you'd spend the rest of your life with.

What we really mean to say:

Selfishness is guaranteed to hurt marriages, so ask for God's help in putting your husband or wife ahead of yourself so you *don't* trash your marriage.

Pick at Each Other

The second step is to *pick at each other*. If you know that something you do annoys your spouse, be sure to do it often. And intentionally. When she complains about it, tell her to buzz off, it's not as annoying as the stupid things she does to bug *you*. The more childish the annoying habit, the better.

Be critical of the smallest thing the other one says and does. Don't let your spouse

get away with anything! Stay vigilant for every little offense. Be sure to address these small details with an air of superiority . . . unless it works better for you to act like a martyr, as if you deserve the Nobel Prize for putting up with someone who doesn't squeeze the toothpaste from the end.

Always get the last word when you're arguing. Dr. Phil McGraw has said that the most accurate predictor of divorce is when people don't allow their partners to retreat with dignity. So make your spouse feel whipped and defeated at the end of a fight. As long as you win, that's what matters.

Let The Kids Be More Important

A third step to trashing your marriage is to *let the kids become more important than your spouse*. Moms, make your husband feel left out of the intimate, secret relationship between you and your baby. As the baby grows, continue to draw the line where it's you and your child on one side, your husband on the other. Keep your Mommy hat on all day and all night. Your kids don't care if your hair is brushed and if you put on perfume and a little makeup before Daddy comes home, so why should he?

Dads, invest all your energies into making your child succeed at what he's good at, or what you *want* him to be good at. Squeeze out Mom so that you will be your kid's favorite parent. Work so hard on homework and school projects that there's no time for family time.

Let the kids and your other priorities crowd out your "alone together" time. Date nights are for unmarried people! In order to be fulfilled as a person, it is essential to invest all your energies in parenting, career, housework, church commitments and hobbies, so don't worry if there isn't enough time left over for the two of you. It's no big deal. There's always tomorrow. Or next year.

What we really mean to say:

Hey! If you find yourself doing these things, *stop!* You don't have to trash your marriage!

Show Disrespect

Show disrespect for your spouse, especially in public. One of the best ways to disrespect your partner is ugly name-calling, especially about things he or she can't change. However, the old standbys of "stupid," "fat," "ugly," "weak," and "loser" are always effective, too.

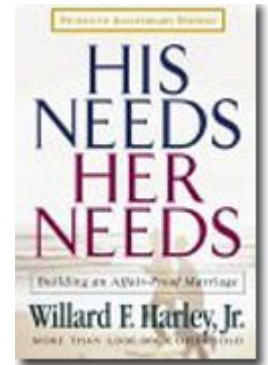
Complain about your spouse to your friends. It's even more powerful if you do it in front of your spouse. Then, if he objects, punch him in the arm and say, "I'm just kidding! You take everything so *seriously!*"

There are a number of ways to show disrespect with nonverbal communication. Roll your eyes, cluck your tongue, narrow your eyes in contempt. The heavy sigh is a real winner, too.

Wives: Straighten out your husband when he makes a mistake, especially in front of others. Lecture him. Ridicule him: his feelings, his behavior, his dreams, his thoughts. Do everything you can to emasculate your husband. Husbands: Let your wife know you think your opinion is better than hers. Interrupt her when she's speaking.

Refuse to Meet Emotional Needs

Another easy way to trash your marriage is *to refuse to meet your spouse's emotional needs*. Men and women need different things from their life partners. Dr. Willard Harley discovered and examined a pattern in his excellent book *His Needs, Her Needs*. Husbands' top needs, it turns out, are: first of all sexual fulfillment; second, recreational companionship; third, an attractive spouse; fourth, domestic support; and fifth, admiration. Wives, if you want to trash your marriage, ignore his need for sex and that you be there for him in leisure time. Blow off his desire that you look your best and he can be proud that you're his wife. Make your home as stressful and chaotic as you can, and never, ever tell him what you admire about him.



Wives' top needs are: first of all affection; second conversations; third, honesty and openness; fourth, financial commitment; and fifth, family commitment. So guys, if you want to trash your marriage, don't show your wife you love and appreciate her. Don't talk to her. Close off your heart to her. Make her constantly worry about finances. Don't be a faithful husband and father.

Dr. Harley's got a Web site, MarriageBuilders.com, that has a lot of good, practical information for building strong marriages, so you'd better stay away from there if you're not interested in being intentional and constructive!

Remember, we're being tongue-in-cheek here. We want you to *build* your marriage, not *trash* it!

Treat Your Friends Better than Your Spouse

The sixth easy step to trashing your marriage is *to treat your friends better than your spouse*. Since a lot of men unfortunately don't even have friends, this is something women tend to do more. Women know how to treat their girlfriends. They call them up just to encourage them. They drop off flowers for no reason.

They send them cards, and they listen intently to whatever's going on in their lives. They are emotionally invested in their friends. They are quick to mention when someone looks nice or does something well because women are usually good at affirming each other. If you want to trash your marriage, don't do any of these thoughtful kindnesses for your husband. If your girlfriend is having a bad day, go out of your way to take her a wonderful casserole *and* fresh salad *and* dessert . . . but serve your husband Spaghetti-O's.

But husbands, if your wife needs you for something at home, and your buddy scores some tickets to a game, tell your wife "too bad, so sad." After all, she'll be around forever but tonight's hockey game won't. If someone at church or in the neighborhood needs something fixed, drop everything to take care of it, even if it means that the broken things around *your* house will continue to go unfixed.

Be a Pansy

Step number seven for trashing your marriage has two parts. Husbands, *be a pansy*. Retreat into the safety of passivity. Refuse to take initiative or responsibility in making plans or suggestions. That way, when things go wrong, you can say, "Don't blame me! It's not my fault!" These are great ways to trash your marriage.

Be His Mother

Wives, *be a mother* to your husband. When people ask how many children you have, say things like, "Two-three, if you count my husband." Tell him to wear a coat when it's cold and take an umbrella when it's raining, because he can't figure it out on his own. Be sure to say "I told you so" as often as possible. If he is passive or irresponsible, jump in and rescue him so he won't have to deal with the consequences of his own choices. Make sure he feels three years old. Tell him how to live his life, down to the smallest detail.

What we really mean to say:

Please, if you find yourself doing these things, ask for God's help in being *constructive* instead of *destructive*. We want to help you *build* your marriage, not *trash* it.

When You're Angry, Blow Up

Let's talk about one final way to trash your marriage. Yell and scream, or quietly say hurtful words; it doesn't matter. Inflicting pain is the important thing. Call each other names in the heat of your emotion. Dredge up the past and bring up old hurts. You can hit or slap with words as well as with hands, and they each leave a different kind of lasting damage to your spouse and to your marriage. Losing control when you're angry is a powerful way to hurt your spouse.

Build Your Marriage in Eight *Harder* Steps

Well, enough of ways to trash your marriage—how about eight steps to build it? All we have to do is look at the opposite of this article's negative, destructive steps.

To build your marriage, fight selfishness by developing a servant's heart. Commit yourself to acting in your spouse's best interests. Do at least one unselfish deed for your husband or wife every day.

Second, instead of picking at each other, choose to let things go. Be grace-givers. Remember that "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8).

Third, be intentional in keeping your marriage at the center of your family. Have regular date nights, and schedule times away to invest in the intimacy of your relationship. Go to a FamilyLife Marriage Conference (www.familylife.com).

Fourth, commit to actively be respectful to your spouse by never saying anything negative to other people. Be kind in your words and actions. Treat each other as

courteously and with the kind of honor you would bestow on a stranger or a dear friend.

Fifth, talk about your spouse's particular [emotional needs](#). Read Willard Harley's excellent book *His Needs, Her Needs*. Find out which ones are most important to *your* partner, and do everything in your power to meet them.

Sixth, treat your husband or wife at least as well as you treat your friends. Be as thoughtful and encouraging and affirming as you can possibly be.

Seventh: Ladies, resign as your husband's mother. You married an adult; treat him with the respect an adult deserves. Men: Your wife needs a servant-leader—someone who refuses either passivity or tyranny—to love her as Christ loves the church.

And last, when you're angry, express it wisely and constructively. Use words like "I'm angry about this" instead of yelling or hurtful silence. If you're too mad to speak with self-control, wait till you cool down. And don't go to bed without dealing with the situation (Eph. 4:26).

You don't *have* to trash your marriage. You can treasure it instead.

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Romantic Hyperbole: A Humorous Look at Honesty in Love

Rusty Wright

It seemed like a good idea at the time.

It would be a great way to express my enduring affection for my wife. I would find seven romantic birthday cards and give one to Meg each day for a week, starting on her birthday. It would continue a sweet tradition begun before we married.

Each card would have a simple picture that would tenderly convey our feelings for one another. Inside would be an endearing slogan or affirmation to which I would add a personal expression of my love for her.

I didn't foresee that Day Three would bring an ethical dilemma.

I carefully selected the cards and arranged them in an appropriate sequence. Day One showed a cute puppy with a pink rose. Inside: "You're the one I love."

Day Two featured a picture of a little boy and girl in a meadow with their arms over each other's shoulders. The slogan: "Happy Birthday to my favorite playmate."

Day Three depicted a beautiful tropical sunset: bluish pink sky, vast ocean, silhouetted palm trees. You could almost feel the balmy breeze. Inside: "Paradise is anywhere with you", to which I added personal mention of places holding special memories for us: an island vacation spot, a North Carolina hotel, our home.

I completed the remaining cards, dated the envelopes, and planned to bestow one card each morning of her birth week. Then reality happened.

You see, I had agreed to go camping with her for Days One and Two. Camping is something Meg thrives on—outdoor living, clean air, hiking, camp fires. It's in her blood. Camping is something I did in Boy Scouts—dust, mosquitoes, noisy campers, smelly latrines. It ranks just below root canals on my list of favorites.

We camped at a state park only fifteen minutes from our home. On her birthday morning, she liked the fluffy puppy. Day Two, the cute kids made her smile. So far, so good.

Meanwhile, I was tolerating camping, doing my best to keep my attitude positive. The food was OK; the bugs were scarce. After two days, I was ready to go home as planned. Meg wanted to stay an extra day. We each got our wish.

Once home and alone, I pulled out Meg's card for "Day Three," the one with the tropical sunset and the "paradise is anywhere with you" slogan.

Should I give her the card? I had chosen to leave the campground. "But," I reasoned with myself, "the slogan was true lots of the time."

I settled on a compromise, a post-it note on the envelope explaining, "You may find that this card contains just a bit of romantic hyperbole."

Might giving it a clever-sounding label defuse my hypocrisy?

The echoes of her laughter still reverberate through our home. I got off easy.

"Speak the truth to each other," wrote a Jewish sage. "Speak. . . the truth in love," advocated a first-century biblical writer. Wise advice for just about any relationship.

"Romantic hyperbole" has become a humorous gauge of truthfulness in our relationship, a test for honesty. Neither of us enjoys every location on earth. She feels some sporting events are a waste of time. I can get bored at shopping malls. But as long as we are honest with each other about our feelings, the bond seems to grow stronger.

That's no hyperbole.

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Safe Sex?

Rusty Wright

Starlight dances off the sparkling water as the waves gently lap the shore. A cool breeze brushes across your face as you stroll hand in hand along the moonlit beach.

The party was getting crowded and the two of you decided to take a walk on the deserted waterfront. You've only known each other a short while but things seem so right. You laugh together and sense a longing to know this person in a deeper way.

You pause and tenderly gaze into each other's eyes, blood rushing throughout your body as your heart beats faster. Soon you are in each other's arms kissing softly at first, then fervently. You tug at each other's clothes and both kneel to the sand. The condom comes on. You join in passionate lovemaking, then relax, hearing only the gentle waves and each other's breathing, grateful that you are comfortable in mutual care and that all is safe.

Or is it?

Was the condom you used enough to keep you safe? Aside from the emotional and psychological implications of your romantic encounter, realize that the condom is not a 100% guarantee of safety against AIDS for the same reason the condom is not a 100% guarantee of safety against pregnancy. There's always the possibility of human or mechanical error. Condoms can slip and break. They also can leak. Even the experts aren't certain condoms can guarantee against sexual transmission of the HIV virus.

Theresa Crenshaw, M.D., has been a member of the President's Commission on HIV. She is past president of the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists^{1} and once asked this question to 500 marriage and

family therapists in Chicago: “How many of you recommend condoms for AIDS protection?”

A majority of the hands went up. Then she asked how many in the room would have sex with an AIDS infected partner using a condom. Not one hand went up.

These were marriage and family therapists, the “experts” who advise others. Dr. Crenshaw admonished them that, “It is irresponsible to give students, clients, patients advice that you would not live by yourself because they may die by it.”[{2}](#) What does this tell you about the confidence experts have in condoms to protect persons against AIDS?

Not too long ago herpes caught the public’s attention. Now, of course, the focus is on AIDS. As with herpes, it is very difficult to be absolutely certain that your partner in premarital sex does not have AIDS and there is no known cure. But, of course, there’s a big difference between herpes and AIDS: herpes will make you sick; AIDS will kill you.

Assessing the Risk

After I had made these remarks at a university in California, one young man asked me to explain what I meant when I said that condoms aren’t safe. Consider this:

Condoms have an 85% (annual) success rate in protecting against pregnancy. That’s 15% a failure rate.[{3}](#) But remember, a women can get pregnant only about six days per month.[{4}](#) HIV can infect a person 31 days per month.

Latex rubber, from which latex gloves and condoms are made, has tiny, naturally occurring voids or capillaries measuring on the order of one micron in diameter. Pores or holes five microns in diameter have been detected in cross sections of latex gloves.[{5}](#) (A micron is one thousandth of a millimeter.) Latex condoms will generally block the human sperm, which is much larger than the HIV virus. (A

human sperm is about 60 microns long and three to five microns in diameter at the head. [{6}](#) But the HIV virus is only 0.1 micron in diameter. [{7}](#) A five- micron hole is 50 times larger than the HIV virus. A one-micron hole is 10 times larger. The virus can easily fit through. It's kind of like running a football play with no defense on the field to stop you or shooting a soccer ball into an open goal. The hole is huge!

In other words, many of the tiny pores in the latex condom are large enough to pass the HIV virus (that causes AIDS) in its fluid medium.

One study focused on married couples in which one partner was HIV positive. When couples used condoms for protection, after one and one-half years, 17% of the healthy partners had become infected. [{8}](#) That's about one in six, the same odds as Russian roulette.

One U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) study tested condoms in the laboratory for leakage of HIV-sized particles. Almost 33% leaked. [{9}](#) One in three.

One analysis of 11 studies on condom effectiveness found that condoms had a 31% estimated failure rate in protecting against HIV transmission. In other words, as the report stated, "These results indicate that exposed condom users will be about a third as likely to become infected as exposed individuals practicing "unprotected" sex.... The public at large may not understand the difference between "condoms may reduce risk of" and "condoms will prevent" HIV transmission. It is a disservice to encourage the belief that condoms will prevent sexual transmission of HIV. Condoms will not eliminate risk of sexual transmission and, in fact, may only lower risk somewhat." [{10}](#) Burlington County, New Jersey, banned condom distribution at its own county AIDS counseling center. Officials feared the legal liabilities if people contracted AIDS or died after using the condoms the county distributed. They were afraid the county would be held legally responsible for the deaths. [{11}](#)

Over Easy Please

Latex condoms are sensitive to heat, cold, light, and pressure. The FDA recommends they be stored in “a cool, dry place, out of direct sunlight, perhaps in a drawer or closet.”[{12}](#) Yet they are often shipped in metal truck trailers without climate control. In winter the trailers are like freezers. In summer they’re like ovens. Some have reached 185F (85C) inside. A worker once fried eggs in a skillet next to the condoms, using the heat that had accumulated inside the trailer.[{13}](#) Are you thinking of entrusting your life to this little piece of rubber?

Is the condom safe? Is it safer? Safer than what?

Look at it this way: If you decide to drive the wrong way down a divided highway, is it safer if you use a seat belt?[{14}](#) You wouldn’t call the process “safe.” To call it “safer” completely misses the point. It’s still a very risky and a very foolish thing to do.

Remember that a national study found that condoms have a 15% failure rate with pregnancy. Perhaps you have flown in airplanes. Suppose only 15 crashes occurred for every 100 plane flights. Would you say airline travel was safe? Safer?[{15}](#) Would you still fly?

AIDS expert Dr. Redfield of the Walter Reed Hospital put it like this at an AIDS briefing in Washington, DC: If my teenage son realizes it’s foolish to drink a fifth of bourbon before he drives to the party, do I tell him to go ahead and drink a six pack of beer first, instead? [{16}](#) According to Dr. Redfield, when you’re considering AIDS, “Condoms aren’t safe; they’re dangerous.”[{17}](#)

The Test

You might say, “We’ve both been tested for AIDS. Neither of us has it.”

The time span between HIV infection and detection of HIV antibodies has been

found to be anywhere from three to six months, sometimes longer. [{18}](#) In rare cases it can even take years for signs of the virus to appear. [{19}](#) Dr. Redfield says that after he was exposed to HIV in his work, he waited 14 months before having sex with his wife. [{20}](#) Suppose you meet someone who says, “I had an HIV test a year ago; it was negative. I haven’t had sex for a year. I just had another test; it was negative. I’m safe.” You see the test results in writing. Is it safe to sleep with that person?

We all know how hormones can influence honesty. It comes down to this: Are they telling the truth about not being sexually active in the interim? Is there even a chance that person might twist the truth even slightly in order to get into bed with you? Even with the tests, it all boils down to trust. That’s why I say, “It’s very difficult to be absolutely certain that your partner in premarital sex does not have AIDS.”

“Condom sense” is very, very risky. Common sense says, “If you want to be safe, wait.”

The Total You

There are many other benefits to waiting (or to stopping until marriage, if you’re a sexually active single). By “waiting,” I mean reserving sex for marriage.

Sex involves your total personality—body, mind, and spirit. Besides being physically risky, premarital sex can hurt you emotionally and relationally. While you are single, sex can breed insecurity (“Am I the only one they’ve slept with? Have there been, or will there be, others?”). It can generate performance fears that can dampen sexual response. (If you fear even slightly that your acceptance by your partner hinges on your sexual performance, that fear can hamper your performance.) It can cloud the issue, confusing you into mistaking sexually charged sensations for genuine love.

After you marry, you might wonder, “If they slept with me before we married, how

do I know that they won't sleep with someone else now that we are married?" (Marital faithfulness in the age of AIDS is, of course, important both emotionally and physically.) When disagreements crop up with your mate, will you be tempted to ask yourself, "Did we just marry on a wave of passion?" Don't forget flashbacks, those mental images of previous sexual encounters that have a nasty way of creeping back into your mind during arousal. Who wants to be thinking of previous sex partners while making love with their spouse? Worse, who wants their spouse to be thinking of previous sex partners?

Waiting until marriage can help you both have the confidence, security, trust, and self respect that a solid, intimate relationship needs. "I really like what you said about waiting," said a recently married young woman after a lecture at Sydney University in Australia. "My fianc and I had to make the decision and we decided to wait." (Each had been sexually active in other previous relationships.) "With all the other tensions, decisions, and stress of engagement, sex would have been just another worry. Waiting 'till our marriage before we had sex was the best decision we ever made."[\[21\]](#)

Why Is It Hard to Wait?

Apart from the obvious physical power of one's sex drive, there are other equally powerful emotional factors that can make it difficult to wait. A longing to be close to someone or a yearning to express love can generate intense desires for physical intimacy. Many singles today want to wait but lack the inner strength or self-esteem They want to be loved as we all do and may fear losing love if they postpone sex. They are frustrated when unable to control their sexual drives or when relationships prove unfulfilling.

Often sex brings an emptiness rather than the wholeness people seek through it. As one TV producer told me, "Frankly, I think the sexual revolution has backfired in our faces. It's degrading to be treated like a piece of meat." The previous night her lover had justified his decision to sleep around by telling her, "There's plenty

of me for everyone." What I suspect he meant was, "There's plenty of everyone for me." She felt betrayed and alone.

I explained to her and to her TV audience that sexuality also involves the spiritual. One wise spiritual teacher understood our loneliness and longings for love. He recognized human emotional needs for esteem, acceptance, and wholeness and offered a plan to meet them. His plan has helped people to become whole "new creatures," {22} that is, "brand new person(s) inside." {23} He taught that we can be accepted just as we are, even with our faults. {24} We can enjoy the self-esteem that comes from knowing who we are and that our lives can count for something significant. {25} He promised unconditional love to all who ask. {26} Once we know we're loved and accepted, we can have greater security to be vulnerable in relationships and new inner strength to make wise choices for safe living. {27} This teacher said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." {28} "My peace I give to you," He explained. "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." {29} Millions attest to the safety and security He can provide in relationships. His name, of course, is Jesus of Nazareth. I placed my faith in Him personally my freshman year at Duke, Two Lambda Chi's influenced me in that direction. Though I was skeptical at first, it "has made all the difference," as Robert Frost would say.

Sex and spirituality are, of course, quite controversial topics. I realize that our International Fraternity contains a wide spectrum of beliefs on these issues. I offer these perspectives not to preach but to stimulate healthy thinking.

Diversity was one of the things that attracted me to our chapter at Duke. Politically, philosophically, and spiritually we ran the gamut. There were liberals, conservatives, Christians, Jews, atheists, and agnostics. We tried to respect one another and learn from each other even when we differed on issues like these. That is the spirit in which I offer these remarks; may I encourage you to consider them in the same way.

To summarize, the only truly safe sex is the lovemaking that occurs in a faithful monogamous relationship where both partners are HIV negative. Condoms may reduce the risk of HIV transmission somewhat, but they can't guarantee prevention. Please, don't entrust your life to something as risky as a condom.

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14. "Condoms Fail," *Staying Current* (the newsletter of AIDS Information Ministries), iv: III (May-June 1992), p. 4.
15. George V. Corwell, "When simple solutions yield deadly results," *Trenton*

Times (NJ), February 5, 1993. (Corwell is associate director for education, New Jersey Catholic Conference, Trenton, NJ.)

16. Robert Redfield, Jr., M.D., "Why Wait? Capital Briefing; AIDS: What You're Not Hearing Could Kill Your Youth," oral presentation), Washington, DC, May 8, 1992. (Dr. Redfield is chief of the Department of Retroviral Research at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.)

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid. Redfield says that some people with hypogammaglobulinemia do not make antibodies, hence it takes years for them to show signs of HIV infection. (Current HIV tests detect not the virus itself, but rather the antibodies that the human body manufactures to attempt to fight the virus.)

20. Ibid.

21. Space limits extensive development here of the practical, psychological, and emotional advantages of waiting. These have been more adequately discussed in Rusty Wright and Linda Raney Wright, *How to Unlock the Secrets of Love, Sex, and Marriage*, Barbour Books, 1981; Rusty Wright, "Dynamic Sex: Beyond Technique and Experience," Campus Crusade for Christ, 1977.

22. 2 Corinthians 5:17, New American Standard Bible.

23. 2 Corinthians, 5:17, Living Bible.

24. Luke 15:10-32.

25. John 1:12; II Corinthians 5:20.

26. John 3:16; 13:34-35; 17:20, 23, 26; I John 4:7-21.

27. Acts I :8; Ephesians 5: 18; Galatians 5: 16-24; I Corinthians 6:18-20.

28. John 8:32.

29. John 14:27, NIV.

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*Freeing Cultural Captives.
Building Confident Ambassadors.*

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