

# Everybody's NOT Doing It

By Pam Woody

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“How are we supposed to stand for what’s right when it feels like we’re the only ones? We want to wait, but we get tired of hearing that everybody’s doing it,” my teenage daughters asked. “We believe in abstinence, but it’s so hard to hear the criticism.”

My teens have committed themselves to sexual integrity, yet we often discuss questions like this, trying to help them make wise choices and live healthy lives.

The abstinence message is the only healthy alternative for a generation that’s been lied to about self-worth, personal character and the value of vows. When every man does what is right in his own eyes, significant consequences result: sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unplanned pregnancies, heartache. Sharing these realities with our children will help them see the truth about sex outside of marriage.

We must teach them to never consider the human person in parts, but to consistently view the individual as a whole, just as God does. This includes the connection between the intellectual, spiritual, physical, social and emotional dimensions.

American culture over-emphasizes the physical dimension as it promotes self-worth through physical beauty and sexual freedom apart from a committed marital relationship. Human beings, including teens, are multidimensional, and their physical choices have a direct effect on their emotions, social circles, successes, spiritual well-being and intellectual ability to think and choose.

## **Broken teens**

Teen pregnancy in America occurs for about 1 million girls each year. That’s about one teen girl every 31 seconds. Young mothers and fathers are more likely to have low incomes, experience limited social opportunities and drop out of school. Babies born to teen parents often lack adequate prenatal care and nourishment, risk premature birth and a low birth weight, and are more likely to be abused by their parents.

Abortion is often seen as a viable option for teen mothers, yet a survey of women who have had abortions shows that 85 percent felt underinformed, and 53 percent felt forced by friends and loved ones. Untold numbers of American women now deal with Post Abortion Stress Syndrome and the physical, emotional and relational issues associated with the “quick fix” that abortion offers.

Another consequence of premarital sex is just as haunting. Until the 1970s, there were only two major STIs in America, both of which could be easily cured with penicillin. America now hosts more than 25 STIs, many without a discovered cure. Statistics indicate that more than 60 million Americans are currently infected with an STI, and 15 million new cases occur each year.

One in four teens who are sexually active will contract an STI. Living with such a disease is more than just uncomfortable or embarrassing; it can destroy a female’s reproductive system, cause male sterility and even lead to death. Teens need to understand that abstinence is the only guaranteed protection.

## **The better way**

On the other side of this issue, studies show that sexual satisfaction is greater for couples who are married and faithful to one another than for couples who are not. Studies regarding sexual activity outside of marriage have also indicated that couples who live together before committing to marriage have a 50 percent greater chance of divorce. Statistics such as these strengthen the case for abstinence until marriage, proving that sexual purity cultivates self-control and leads to greater

trust and security within marriage. Regardless of cultural messages, we must remind our teens the choices made as young adults will have long-term effects.

God's Word is clear regarding sexual integrity and the consequences that come with poor choices; the broken lives detailed in the Old Testament should be evidence enough that sexual promiscuity comes with a price. But apart from biblical convictions, "abstinence till marriage" stands alone as *the only* defense anyone has against the STI epidemic, unwanted pregnancy and the increased risk of broken marriages.

So when questioned by my teens about purity, I remind them that everybody's *not* doing it, that character counts and that somewhere out there a handsome prince is still worth waiting for!