



Good intentions are no substitute for good preparation.



# Lesson 5

## Sex: God's Gift

### Those Who Wait Have It Better

Of all sexually active people, married couples are the most physically and emotionally satisfied.

It is best if you have only one sexual partner in a lifetime. Physical and emotional satisfaction starts to decline when people have had more than one sexual partner.

Cohabiting couples, compared to married couples, have less healthy relationships.

Marriages preceded by cohabitation are 50 to 100 percent more likely to break up than marriages in which the couple didn't live together before marriage.

Aggression (domestic violence) is at least twice as common among cohabitators as it is among married partners.

Married people have significantly lower rates of alcoholism, suicide, and psychiatric care, and higher rates of self-reported happiness.<sup>1</sup>

Sandi and Karl have been madly in love with each other since Karl graduated from high school three years ago. Now that they are both in college, they're always together, and everybody knows they're going to get married. The question is, When? And what do they do between now and then!

At first they had talked about waiting until they were both out of college—which would be almost two more years. But lately they have been talking about an earlier date, even though Sandi knows her folks won't be very happy.

Why the rush? Sandi and Karl made a promise to each other to wait until they got

married to have sex, but it has been getting more difficult to say No, especially since Karl got an apartment, and they've been spending the evenings studying together.

Somehow they always end up on the sofa in each other's arms, and a couple of times Sandi was afraid she was going to give in to Karl's aggressive kissing and caressing, when suddenly Karl took the initiative to cool it. But what if Karl hadn't?

"Is this the way we're supposed to live?" they questioned, "Getting turned on sexually and then hoping one of us will have enough sense to back down before we go all the way?"

They're going to get married—why wait? What's the difference between having sex a



year—or even a few months before marriage—and waiting until you make a public commitment to each other, say the magic words, “I do,” and have a piece of paper called a marriage license? After all, the pill has been around for more than a generation, so they don’t have to worry about pregnancy. And who needs to know?

At this moment Karl and Sandi need to reevaluate their relationship.

First, they need to decide if being virgins on their wedding night is worth the wait. Unless they’re clear on this and either move the wedding date up to fit the speed at which they are moving toward sexual fulfillment, or force themselves to decelerate their physical involvement with each other until an appropriate time for a wedding, they’re not going to be able to keep the promise they made.

Second, they need to figure out if they’re really in love. Are they experiencing a romantic illusion, or does their relationship have enough substance to become a life-long, one-flesh relationship, “for better or worse—till death do us part”?

If Sandi and Karl asked you what you thought they should do, how would you counsel them?

Let’s start with the “why wait?” issue:

### **Why wait?**

Here’s a common list of reasons why sex should wait till marriage. Which one do you think is the most important? Which ones would you use to try to convince Sandi and Karl to keep their commitment to each other?

**1. God said so.** The sexual relationship was not to be experienced outside of marriage. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Ephesians 5:3; and 1 Corinthians 6:12-19.)

Let’s take a closer look at why Paul said what he did in 1 Corinthians 6:12-19. It appears that a vocal group in Corinth was suggesting that it was permissible to do with your body whatever you wanted. They argued that since eating and the digesting of food was temporal, and therefore had no bearing on one’s morals and inner spiritual life, the same would be true of other physical activities such as sex outside of marriage.

Paul strongly objected to this line of reasoning. He clearly put eating in a different category from sexual immorality by saying, “‘Everything is permissible for me’—but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible for me’—but I will not be mastered by anything.” Paul indicates here that while eating is normal, engaging in unlawful sex is not “beneficial” and could become a controlling factor in many relationships.

Here’s an interesting quotation from *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*.

The apostle sets the stage for his discussion of the horrors of sexual immorality and in contrast the holy use of the Christian’s body by stating that as the Christian evaluates his right to do “all things,” he should face four questions: (1) Is the thing contemplated beneficial? (2) Will the practice in question overpower and dominate him and will the result affect others? (3) Will the practice



support the truth that the body is “for the Lord” who created it and intended it to be used for his glory? Also, (4) will it support the truth that “the Lord is for the body”—that is, the Lord has redeemed the body (vv. 19, 20)? So the Christian must have no part with sexual immorality, because the body is not meant for sexual license (v. 13B, cf. Genesis 2:24) but for the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

There is a reason God says wait! For everything really important in this world, God gave us a symbol to help us remember

## **Intercourse is God’s symbol for marriage: a one-flesh lifetime commitment.**

it. To remember Creation, He gave us the Sabbath. To memorialize the burying of our old selves and being born again, God gave us baptism. Satan has tried to destroy the meaning of these symbols by introducing counterfeits such as Sunday for the day of worship and sprinkling for baptism. Intercourse is God’s symbol for marriage: a one-flesh lifetime commitment. In all other relationships, sex is forbidden. But every time intercourse is experienced within marriage, it should remind couples of their commitment to each other. God even created sex with some wonderfully exhilarating feelings (called a climax or orgasm), thus providing another reason for couples to come together again and again

to celebrate their commitment.

Obviously Satan would like to destroy this symbol, for if he can destroy marriages, he destroys not only the couple, but emotionally cripples their children. That’s why he has three counterfeits: (A) Premarital sex. If you have sex before marriage, especially with a number of individuals, you will have destroyed the symbolic lifetime one-flesh meaning sex could have for you in marriage. (B) Masturbation. If you can get the pizazz (climax or orgasm) without a sexual partner, the meaning of oneness with your marriage partner is gone. (C) Homosexuality. Homosexual experiences nullify the symbolism. Same-sex bodies weren’t designed to signify the one-flesh concept.

**2. Premarital sex can trigger lifetime guilt, regret, and painful memories.**  
When there is a violation of God’s will for our lives, the healthy consequence is that the sinner experiences feelings of guilt that lead to repentance and a change in behavior. Some people, however, have a hard time forgiving themselves for sexual sins. The memories of immoral behavior haunt the person again and again. Secular society has lied to young people, saying that if standards were more open, there would be no guilt. The truth is that God’s moral code is the internal software that runs our systems, and regardless of how you have been reared, you are created to experience guilt and regret when living an immoral life. The answer to getting relief from guilt is **not** getting rid of God. God isn’t the cause of guilt; immoral behavior is the cause. Instead, follow King David’s



example: Repent and enjoy the wonderful feeling of being forgiven.

**3. Guilt feelings over sex before marriage can be carried over to sex in marriage.** If you participate in premarital sex, it's quite natural to feel guilty. The more sex happens, accompanied by the corresponding feeling of guilt, the more difficult it will be later in a marital relationship to have guilt-free sex. Even though you know it's OK in marriage, your mind still associates sex with guilt.

Closely related to this is the way Sandi and Karl are training their bodies to respond during sexual excitement. They know sexual

### **Having premarital sex is like giving a million dollars away—and when you need it, not being able to get it back!**

intercourse is wrong before marriage, so they get to the plateau stage of sexual arousal and then back away from each other (which is **very** difficult to do). They are training their bodies to respond only to a certain level and then shut down. This is a common cause of sexual dysfunction in marriage. As high as 30 percent of women do not experience orgasm, and this practice is a contributing factor.<sup>3</sup>

**4. Sex can make it difficult to distinguish between real love and infatuation.** Because sexual intercourse is designed to bring two people together as one, when it is

experienced outside of marriage, it can confuse a person's feelings and decision-making ability. Having sex makes the couple feel so in love that they think it is safe to go ahead and get married, causing them to disregard major differences. But the fact is, premarital sex promotes body unity—not mind and soul unity, which is essential for a lifetime commitment.

**5. Premarital pregnancy.** If you think the pill has eliminated the problem of unintended pregnancy, then why is the number of abortions and unwed mothers so high? There is no 100 percent-safe method of birth control, short of sterilization—and even then accidents happen! To say that a given birth-control method is 99 percent (or whatever percent) effective is to say that it's guaranteed sooner or later to fail! Consider how very different your life would be if you became one of those statistics.

**6. Research indicates premarital sex isn't good for marriage.** Those who have premarital sex tend: (a) to have less happy marriages, (b) to have their marriages end in divorce, (c) to have extramarital affairs, and (d) to be less satisfied overall with their marital sex lives. That's sad, isn't it? Living together before marriage isn't a smart thing to do if you're interested in a healthy marriage and a long-term, vibrant sex life!

**7. It destroys virginity,** which is the one thing God has given to each individual to give to their marriage partner as a wedding gift. Having premarital sex is like giving a million dollars away—and when you need it, not being able to get it back! Some have



had their virginity stolen through abuse or an unwise decision. If this has happened to you, all is not lost. You can choose from this day forward to keep yourself pure until your wedding day, and God will bless your commitment.

**8. It destroys reputations.** Sandi and Karl may think they can keep premarital sex a secret, but eventually someone will find out, or the guilt may drive one of the partners to confess. Before making the choice to have sex before marriage, couples should talk about how this would affect their reputations when others find out. They should also consider what effect the knowledge of their sexual involvement would have on their parents and families.

**9. It can destroy a trust relationship.** Once premarital sex has occurred, there is a very good chance that one or both partners may sometime in the future question, "If this person would have sex with me outside the marriage relationship, might he or she have this same experience with another?" This leads to doubt, mistrust, and jealousy.

**10. It destroys the value and meaning of the honeymoon.** This reason, alone, is enough to say, "NO, NO, NO!" But, of course, how can Sandi and Karl know how important this is when they've never experienced the excitement, the anticipation, and the marvelous sense of fulfillment that is all intended to be a part of their honeymoon?

**11. Attitudes often change after a premarital sex experience.** Even though Sandi and Karl think they are so in love that it will

last a lifetime, premarital sex can do strange things to feelings. Once you experience sex, you may no longer respect the other person, and suddenly, like dominoes, all your loving feelings begin to tumble, and a reversion reaction sets in.

**12. Flashbacks of previous sexual encounters can haunt a marriage.** There's no guarantee Sandi and Karl will get married to each other. If not, how will their actions affect their future marriages? It's a lot easier to control your body than your mind. People who have participated in premarital sex often complain of intrusive memories. "It's like having three people making love in one bed," said one. Second marriages aren't immune to flashbacks. But the guilt associated with promiscuous sexual behavior tends to make flashbacks doubly troublesome!

**13. Sex can cover up serious difficulties in a relationship.** Sometimes couples become sexually involved because the only time they aren't making war is when they are making love! Before marriage, sex can keep the lid on the can of problematic worms. But once married, watch out!

**14. Sex can be an escape mechanism** to get out of a bad home situation. Victims of domestic violence and abuse may have such a negative view of marriage that they shy away from commitment and go from one sexual relationship to another.

**15. You never know whom you will marry.** It's not uncommon for a person to date someone for a year or so and then end up marrying that person's sibling, cousin, or best friend. Can you imagine the hurt and



the guilt that would result if you had been physically involved with one person and ended up marrying another?

**16. Premarital sex tends to be habit-forming**, especially when sex is experienced with a number of partners. If the sexual act no longer means a one-flesh commitment for life, then what is there to prevent a spouse from finding sexual partners outside of the marriage relationship? When sex with various partners becomes a habit, it's almost impossible for a wife or husband, no matter how good they may be in bed, to continue to satisfy their spouse's increased appetite for novelty and change. If you marry someone who has had multiple sexual partners, you may find their sexual appetite is difficult to satisfy. They have actually become addicted to the excitement of the conquest.

**17. Promiscuous sex isn't good for your health.** There are an estimated twelve million new cases of STDs in the United States each year. Of these, three million occur among teenagers, thirteen to nineteen years old. A report from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in 1997 documented that over 85 percent of the most common infectious diseases in the United States are sexually transmitted.

The HIV virus, which causes AIDS, can stay dormant in a person's body for ten years or more—exposing every sexual partner during this time to a death sentence. Are condoms the answer? The University of Texas Medical Branch found that condoms were only 69 percent effective in preventing the transmission of HIV in heterosexual cou-

ples. That means that about one out of every three who played "sexual Russian Roulette" lost!<sup>4</sup> Because of these frightening statistics, one could conclude that staying a virgin—and marrying a virgin—could likely be a life-or-death matter.

**18. First sexual experiences outside of marriage are notoriously unsuccessful.** Because of the emotion attached, they are difficult to forget. Usually the girl reluctantly yields while the fellow awkwardly and hastily satisfies his own selfish desires. The result is an unpleasant, unsatisfying experience for the girl—a painful memory. The fellow senses her disappointment and secretly feels he's not a real man—and in too many cases goes on to conquer others. Is this really what you want? It's so much better to plan in your mind the atmosphere surrounding your first sexual experience. Picture yourself dressed in your best going-away outfit, just recently showered with rice, checking into the bridal suite. The bride is carried over the threshold, there's music playing and roses on the dresser. You light the candles and... If that's what you want, don't settle for anything less!

### **Is it true love or a romantic illusion?**

Most relationships start out as romantic illusions. Some call it lust or infatuation! Whatever you call it, it's a totally absorbing type of love, binding two people in a whirlwind of bliss that makes them oblivious to reason and reality. True love takes time to develop and is a beautiful blend of passion and accountability, spontaneity and design, tenderness and strength, innocence and rea-



son. It's the kind of love that God designed to last a lifetime.

Romantic illusions can grow into lifetime love if a couple has no hidden pathology from their pasts that will negatively affect their futures, and if their personalities are compatible, their interests are similar, and their commitment to each other is based on more than feelings. But you can never assume that this intense short-term lust will simmer into a lifelong love affair. That's why marriage should never take place during the passionate stage of a romance.

In her book *When You're Serious About Love*, Kay Kuzma presents a list of questions that Sandi and Karl should ask about their relationship to determine if their love for each other is mature enough to last a lifetime. If they answer Yes to any of them, they should not get married until their love is more mature.<sup>5</sup>

1. Has your lover swept you off your feet in a whirlwind romance that has taken your breath away and left you weak-kneed? (If yes, be careful.)
2. Are you more in love when you are together than when you are by yourself, or are you in love with the writer of love letters and find yourself confused when you are once again together? (Love is stable, not up and down, depending upon whether you are together or not.)
3. Would you be quite jealous and upset if someone else made a serious play for your loved one? (One of the greatest mistakes young people can make is to believe that the more violent the jeal-

ousy, the stronger the love. Irrational feelings of jealousy signify possessiveness, not love.)

4. Do both of you have a substantial number of complaints in common about home, parents, school, and other things in your lives? (Being companions in misery is not the same as being in love. All too frequently couples mix up the two and enter into marriage simply because each has discovered a fellow sufferer with whom to unite against an unfriendly world.)
5. Would your family and friends say your personality, behavior, or attitudes have changed for the worse during this courtship? (If it's really love, your friends and family will affirm to you that you are a better, more responsible, and happier person now than before.)
6. Is your relationship with your parents strained? (A true love relationship should enhance all relationships, including your relationship with your folks.)
7. When you aren't with your boyfriend or girlfriend, do you find yourself sighing and day dreaming? (This is a sign of being in love with love and not with a human being for whom you want the best and want to become the best.)
8. Do you find that you are always anxious or on guard to make sure you are at your best when you are together? Are you overly conscious about what you say and how you look or act? (Love doesn't make lovers feel ill at ease. When you are still trying to



impress the other person, you are the dominant concern in the relationship, not the other person.)

9. If you receive a love letter, or if your boyfriend or girlfriend communicates something meant just for you, are you tempted to share his or her words with others? (Love isn't real if one party permits intimate details of a relationship to be made public.)
10. Do you feel less close to God now than you did before you fell in love? (Too many people try to rationalize away their spiritual convictions when their hearts want to pursue a relationship with someone who is spiritually insensitive. True love should draw you closer to God's love.)

"If you are blessed with God-fearing parents, seek counsel of them. Open to them your hopes and plans, learn the lessons which their life experiences have taught, and you will be saved many a heartache. Above all, make Christ your counselor. Study His word with prayer."<sup>6</sup>

11. Have your ideals and standards slipped since you met each other? (Love should inspire you to become everything God intended you to become.)
12. Do you get angry and defensive when someone doesn't approve of this relationship or doesn't think you are right for each other? (True love is not easily angered—1 Corinthians 13:5.)
13. Do you know what you want, regardless of whatever counsel someone may

give, and therefore don't seek advice or resist it when it's offered? (True love will weather analysis and grow stronger because of it. And given time, others will affirm that this relationship is a positive one for both individuals.)

14. Is your relationship so involved physically that you tend to ignore subtle irritations, knowing that you would probably feel guilty if this relationship did not culminate in marriage? (Sexual passion is probably the biggest reason why people get married before carefully assessing each other's compatibility. True love is a rational love.)
15. Do you have only a vague idea of how each other feels about money, children, role expectations, and sex? (True love is practical. It's often the little things that you don't think are important at this point of your relationship that will make or break a marriage.)

How much better it is to wait for marriage until the illusion of romantic love settles into the real thing!



### Anchor Text

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).



### Bible Search

#### 1. How to avoid the trap of lust

Read in Judges 13–16 the story of Samson and discuss these questions, noting specific texts to justify your answers.

- A. What evidence is there that Samson was chosen of God for a special work?



- B. How did lust get Samson into trouble the first time with his Philistine wife?
- C. How did lust get Samson into trouble the second time with a prostitute?
- D. How did lust get Samson into trouble the third time with his lover, Delilah?
- E. Although it could be said when he pulled down the temple and killed the Philistines that “all things work together for good,” do you think the way Samson lived his life was God’s first choice for him? Explain your answer.

## 2. Ruth and Boaz

Read Ruth 2–4 about the courtship of Ruth and Boaz. Read a Bible commentary to understand the marriage custom in that culture; then answer the following:

- A. What role did the mother-in-law play in this courtship?
- B. Why did Ruth sleep at the feet of Boaz?
- C. What did Boaz have to do for the right to marry Ruth?
- D. What evidence is there that Boaz loved Ruth?

## 3. Joseph and Mary

Read the account of Mary’s pregnancy and the reaction of Joseph in Luke 1:26–45; 2:1–7; and Matthew 1:18–25; then answer the following questions:

- A. What was Mary’s marital status when she got pregnant?
- B. Why was it important for Mary to be engaged, or “espoused,” before she got pregnant? (See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, under Luke 1:27 “Espoused” and Matthew 1:18.)

- C. When did Joseph learn of her pregnancy? What did he immediately decide to do? What changed his mind?
- D. Why does Scripture say that Joseph thought that he should “divorce” Mary, when they weren’t yet married—or were they? Was this idea a selfish act to save his reputation or a merciful one to save Mary’s? (See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Matthew 1:19.)
- E. Why does Matthew call Mary the “wife” of Joseph before Christ’s birth (see Matthew 1:24) and Luke say “Mary, who was pledged to be married to him” in Luke 2:5?
- F. When did Joseph marry Mary, before Jesus’ birth or after? (Think about it—would it have been proper for Joseph to travel with Mary to Bethlehem if they weren’t married? See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Luke 2:5.) When did Joseph first have sex with Mary, before Jesus’ birth or after? What verse in Matthew 1 gives evidence of your answer?

## Endnotes

1. Excerpts from Glenn S. Stanton, “Guess What...God Knows Best!” *Focus on the Family* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Focus on the Family, August 1995), 2–4.
2. Frank E. Gaebeline, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 10:224.
3. Michael J. McManus, *Marriage Savers: Helping Your Family and Friends Avoid Divorce* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995).
4. Susan C. Weller, “A Meta-Analysis of Condom Effectiveness in Reducing Sexually Transmitted HIV,” *Social Science & Medicine*, June 1993, 1635–1644.
5. Kay Kuzma, *When You’re Serious About Love* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 168–177.
6. Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 435.



# Reaction

## Discussion Questions

1. What do you think Sandi and Karl should do about their promise to each other to wait for their wedding night to have sex?
2. If you have made a commitment to not have sex until you get married, what are three reasons in the narrative that are the most convincing to you?
3. If Sandi and Karl decide to wait until marriage, what changes would you suggest in their current physical relationship that would make it easier for them to keep their commitment?
4. Who do you think can more readily determine whether a couple is experiencing a "romantic illusion"—the couple or their friends and family? Why?
5. What five signs of true love do you think would be the most important for you to remember in future love relationships?
6. Should all the signs of a "romantic illusion" be past before it is safe for a couple to marry? Explain your answer.

## Personal Response

1. A. Have you ever had a crush on someone? Of course you have! It felt like love, didn't it? Being very truthful, go down the list of signs of "romantic illusion" given in the narrative. Check those that were present when you were feeling you were "in love." How many of the fifteen items pointed to "romantic illusion" in your case?  
B. Do you think it will be easier for you to be able to tell the difference between a "romantic illusion" and true love the next time around? Why?
2. How important is virginity to you personally? Why do you think you feel the way you do? Who or what has had the most important impact on your thinking on this matter? Why?



## Practical Application

### 1. Love Relationships

Using the information you learned from Bible Search 1 and 2, write a short report listing the factors from the stories that...

- A. Destined Samson to failure in "love" relationships.
- B. Destined Ruth and Boaz to success in a love relationship.

Be sure to include in your report any pertinent narrative information presented in the first five lessons of this unit.

### 2. Cross-Referencing Bible Verses

- A. In the narrative, you read the following Bible verses on the evils of sexual immorality. Look up each of the following texts in your Bible and

mark them. Cross-reference them so it is possible to go from one to another in case someone ever asks you, "Why wait?"

- (1) 1 Corinthians 6:13.
- (2) 1 Corinthians 6:18, 19.
- (3) 1 Thessalonians 4:3.
- (4) Ephesians 5:3.

- B. Scan the first nine chapters of Proverbs and underline five texts there that you feel should be cross-referenced with the above to help another person make a wise decision about waiting until marriage to have sex; then write a paraphrase of the content of the texts. (Note: Although the sexual issues at that time were prostitution and adultery, what principles still apply?)

- C. Next, read Song of Solomon, chapter 4. Based on what you have read, write a paragraph describing the environment in which you hope to experience intercourse for the first time. If you have already experienced sex, you can choose not to have sex again until you give the gift of yourself to your mate for life. Contrast in your mind the setting of your first sexual experience with what you want to experience on your wedding night. Describe the environment you would like for that experience.