

Statement from Jacob Stewart, FWI Legal Advisor, CSW 2012

As a married man who chose to remain abstinent until marriage and chooses to remain faithful to my wife, there are two prevalent misconceptions or myths that I want to briefly discuss tonight:

Myth 1: Teaching abstinence and fidelity does not work because we can't really expect young people to abstain from sexual activity until marriage.

I am here to tell you that it can be done, because I did it. When I was in high school, I was talking to a friend of mine and the subject of sex came up. I told him I planned to wait until I was married to have sex. He scoffed at the idea. "How do you know you are going to wait," he said. "No one can really know for sure whether or not they are going to have sex before they are married." I assured him that I knew that I would wait until I was married. At the time, I did not do so very eloquently, I just affirmed that I would wait.

The truth is, we are not animals. Except in the case of rape, each of us has the power to choose whether or not to have sex. As human beings, we choose our behavior. Our choices are often based on the things we are taught, the things we believe. If youth are taught that it is best (and why it is best) emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually to wait until marriage to have sex, I am confident the vast majority will postpone sexual debut until marriage.

We must teach youth that abstinence before marriage and fidelity after marriage are the safest and happiest choices they can make regarding their sexual lives. It is not enough, though, to teach the principle. We must also equip youth with techniques so that they know how to control themselves when they encounter sexual desire. We need to teach them how to cope with and control their thoughts and feelings, how to positively associate with members of the opposite sex, how to set boundaries and standards in their relationships. Equipped with the proper tools and understanding, I firmly believe that the majority of youth will choose to live the principles of abstinence and fidelity. The social science data show that this is the case.

Myth 2: Those who postpone sexual debut until marriage do not enjoy sex as much as those who first experiment with several partners.

I had the opportunity to talk to a young woman at CSW 2011. She was dubious that a married couple previously inexperienced in sexual matters could really have a satisfactory sexual relationship in their marriage. I assured her, based on my personal experience, that the sexual relationship between a married man and woman who had both remained abstinent until marriage was *WONDERFUL!!!* From personal experience, I can say that those who wait to have sex until marriage can have a deeply fulfilling, beautiful, and exciting physical relationship. While this is perhaps not true in ALL cases, the social science data show that, on average, those who live the principles of abstinence and fidelity have sex in marriage more often and enjoy it more than those who have had other pre-marital or post-marital sexual partners. I think the reason for this is that a man and woman who have practiced abstinence and fidelity are able to trust each other on a deeper level. They never have to think about the other sexual experiences of their partner. They can learn together, laugh together, and love together.

Of the people I know who have lived abstinence and fidelity and those who have not, those who have saved the best part of themselves for marriage are by far the happiest. I am glad to count myself among that happier group.