



Kim Kimberling, Ph.D.

Author of *"Preparing for the Marriage of a Lifetime"*

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Sex Before Marriage – There are Still Good Reasons to Wait

Purity often seems archaic and abstinence impossible in today's society. Why wait when everyone else is getting the goods now? After all, it's just sex — the focus of most movies, primetime shows, Internet sites, music videos -- even magazine, television and newspaper ads.

In a sex-saturated culture, postponing physical intimacy until after marriage seems outdated and prudish to many, but that's not the whole story. Of course, there are the obvious risks of pregnancy and of contracting HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Less well known, however, is that premarital sex often leads to a host of emotional problems, including guilt, regret, distrust, emptiness, low self-esteem and even depression, notes Dr. Kim Kimberling, Oklahoma City marriage counselor and creator of the internationally successful "Preparing for the Marriage of a Lifetime" premarital counseling course.

"Sex is a basic human need, and within the confines of a loving marital relationship it is perhaps the ultimate form of pleasure, communication and connection," said Kimberling. "Sex connects two people in body and spirit; it's impossible to separate the two. God gave us sex to enjoy, and it is one of the best ways to totally reveal yourself to your spouse and strengthen your marriage in the process."

Kimberling, a professional counselor for 20 years, offers some key points to consider for those contemplating sex prior to marriage.

"Commitment" is a misnomer.

When you're married, you have a commitment. When you're not married, you don't.

"Prior to marriage everything is reversible – including your thoughts, feelings, sexual attraction and even your intention to get married. Studies have shown that people who have sex before marriage usually don't end up married to each other, even when 'commitment' was their initial reason for having sex," said Kimberling.

In other words, "feeling married" doesn't make you married.

Keep your brain in control.

Surging hormones can make this difficult, especially for teenagers or young adults in their first serious relationship.

“Avoiding sexually tempting situations is a first step, but it’s also important to remind yourself frequently that having sex even one time can negatively impact your life,” said Kimberling.

The only 100 percent “safe” sex is no sex at all. Birth control methods can fail; STDs can ruin your health; HIV/AIDS is deadly; and, of course, there’s no condom for your heart.

People often ignore or “soften” God’s rule on premarital sex.

In the Bible, God forbids all sex outside of marriage, a black-and-white command that has been altered by many to merely forbidding promiscuity, explained Kimberling.

“Limiting your sexual disobedience to a single person doesn’t make it right, even if you’re ‘committed’ to that person,” he added.

It’s never too late to start over.

Even if you’ve been sexually active, you can still set new, better boundaries to get your sex life on the right track.

In future relationships, Kimberling suggests focusing on getting to know the other person through conversation, shared activities and interests, rather than becoming physical right away.

Kimberling is president and cofounder of Family Christian Counseling in Oklahoma City. His premarital course, “Preparing for the Marriage of a Lifetime,” is used by churches around the world and is available through books, seminars, a DVD series and a monthly interactive online class. He also is the author of two books, *Preparing for the Marriage of a Lifetime*, and the newly released *Living the Marriage of a Lifetime*. More information about Kimberling’s programs is available at www.prepformarriage.com.

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