HOW TO FIND REAL LOVE

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Permit me to begin by telling you a little bit about myself. I’m a psychologist, a college professor, a family counselor, a husband (married to my wife Judith for 42 years), a father, and a grandfather. I’d like to talk to you today about character, sex, and how to find real love.

All of you here today belong to one of four groups:

1. You have never been sexually intimate with another person, and you do not intend to do so until you get married.

2. You have never been sexually intimate, but you’re not sure what you think about sexual intimacy before marriage.

3. You have been sexually intimate, and you don’t see anything wrong with it.

4. You have been sexually intimate, but you now consider it a mistake—or you’re not sure what you want to do in the future.

Whichever of these four groups you belong to, I would ask you to listen with an open mind and heart to what I’d like to share with you. I’d like to say a special word at the start to anyone who may be in these last two groups—persons who may have already had a sexual relationship. You may think, “It's too late for me to change, even if I wanted to.” But in fact, you have the power to make different choices at any point in your life. You can’t change the past, but you can choose the future. A great many young people have done exactly that.

Let me give you an example of someone who is making a fresh start. She is 22-years old, a former student of mine, and a first-year elementary school teacher. She is now working on her Master’s degree in Education, and last spring she took my graduate course on character education. For her course project, she did a paper titled, “Teaching My Younger Sister About Sex and Love.” In her paper she wrote:

I wanted to inform my 14-year-old sister Kathy about something that I unfortunately just began to take seriously: abstinence. Sure, I have always known what the word meant, but I had never considered it an option for me, until recently. I felt it was my responsibility to pass the philosophy of abstinence on to my sister because I know she won’t get it in the
"going to do it anyway" program that is used at her high school. Also, she is a virgin (her friend is, too), so I wanted to show her how important it is to hold onto that purity.

My student said she began her discussions with her younger sister when she overheard her sister and her friend Michelle talking about a person they referred to as a "slut."

I asked them why they considered her a "slut." Michelle responded, "She has slept with eight guys already, and she is easy." I asked them to think about why this girl is so promiscuous. Kathy said, "She's trying to keep a boyfriend."

We first tackled the issue of sex as "showing love" or "keeping a boyfriend." I used the example of the girl they had been talking about to show how boyfriends come and go whether girls have intercourse with them or not. We also talked about girls' feelings when they are rejected after giving part of themselves to another person.

I then told them about my having had premarital sex, and how I wished these relationships had never occurred—and that the only true way to find out if a guy really loves you is to make him wait until marriage.

We talked about the self-respect and courage involved in leading chaste lives until marriage. These two young girls developed a new awareness of how truly loving relationships and commitments develop and are sustained.

I shared with them that I had recently told my boyfriend I wanted to abstain from sex from now on. He said he couldn’t do that. I asked Kathy and Michelle if they thought this relationship was worth continuing. They both said, "No, he does not love you if he won't wait for you." I was proud of their answer.

Kathy and Michelle are now more confident in their virginity, and have both set the personal goal of saving sex for marriage.

So here is a young woman in her 20s who has started over and who cares enough to help her sister and friend avoid the mistakes she made.

Guys can also start over. A *Newsweek* cover article on the "new virginity" included a story about a young man named Lucian Shulte who said his parents taught him the importance of chastity and that he had always planned to "wait until marriage." But then one warm summer night, he found himself with a girl who was very willing—and they had intercourse. It was over in a hurry and lacked any sense of intimacy. He said:

In the movies, when people have sex, it's always romantic. Physically, it felt good, but emotionally it felt really awkward. I was worried that our relationship was now going to be a lot more serious than it was before. It was like, "Now what is she going to expect from me?"
Lucian felt guilty about what he had done. He also worried about pregnancy and disease. He promised himself, never again. Now, as a college student, he’s still faithful to that decision. He says, “I’m looking forward to intimacy with my wife, someone I’ll truly love and want to spend the rest of my life with. It sounds corny, but it’s for real.”

So never think, “It’s too late for me.” If you haven't saved sex for marriage, start saving it now. Although you can't regain your physical virginity, you can regain chastity at any time. Chastity is a moral decision from this moment forward to save all sexual intimacy for your marriage partner.

What Makes Us Happy?

One of the reasons we all want to find real love is that all of us have a deep-down desire to be happy. But how can we attain happiness? What truly makes us happy?

People who study different societies report that cultures around the world affirm three sources of authentic, lasting happiness. They are:

1. Maturity of character—being the best person you can be.
2. Loving relationships, such as marriage and family.
3. Making a positive difference in the lives of others.

What does it mean to have the first of these—maturity of character? Good character means having the “right stuff” on the inside—virtues such as wisdom, justice, courage, self-control, love, integrity, and humility (see the list of “Ten Essential Virtues”).

Good character is the key to self-respect. It’s the key to earning the respect of others. It’s the key to positive relationships, a sense of fulfillment, and achievements you can be proud of.

How do you develop a good character?

Nobody can build your character for you. Parents and teachers can teach you right from wrong, provide a good example, set and enforce rules, and encourage you to be the best person you can be. But they can’t reach inside you and build your character. You have to do that. Character-building is an “inside job.” You create your character by the choices you make.

Three Portraits of Character

We all recognize good character when we see it. In fact, one of the best ways to develop a good character is to observe people of character and then try to be like them. Let me share with you the stories of three persons—a man, a woman, and a young girl—who are admired by many people for their good character. As you listen to each story, ask yourself: What made this individual a person of character?

Viktor Frankl. The first story is about a man named Viktor Frankl. He died in September, 1997, at the age of 93. He was a Jewish psychiatrist. He wrote 32 books, the most famous of which is Man’s Search for Meaning. It was translated into 26 languages and was one of
the most influential books of the 20th century. In it, Viktor Frankl describes the two years he spent in the dreaded Nazi death camp of Auschwitz.

Frankl was working on an important manuscript when the Nazis came to power in Germany. When the Nazis marched into Austria, Frankl, his young wife, and his parents were swept up and sent to Auschwitz. Soon after, he was separated from his wife and parents. It was not until after the war that he learned that they had been killed by the Nazis, along with 11 million other victims of the Holocaust.

In *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Frankl describes how the Nazis seized his manuscript, stripped him and his fellow prisoners, and shaved them from head to toe in an effort to dehumanize them. But they could not strip him of his character. They could torture or kill his body, but they could not control his mind. Frankl tells of how, in his darkest hours, he fought off despair by focusing his mind on his beloved wife. They had already taken her life, but her image, and the memory of the deep love they had shared as a young married couple, sustained him.

Viktor Frankl survived Auschwitz to tell his story. After the war, he came to America. In his practice as a psychiatrist, he used the strength and wisdom he had gained from his terrible ordeal in the death camp to counsel thousands of people. He helped them find meaning in their lives through loving another person, through their work, through their suffering, and by serving God. In *Man’s Search for Meaning*, he writes:

> Everything can be taken from us except one thing—the freedom to choose our attitude in any set of circumstances. We must never forget that we may find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation, when facing a fate that cannot be changed. For what matters then is to bear witness to the uniquely human potential to transform a tragedy into a triumph. When we are no longer able to change a situation—just think of an incurable disease such as inoperable cancer—we are challenged to change ourselves.³

**Osceola McCarty.** The second story is about an African-American woman named Osceola McCarty. She was thrust into the international limelight in 1995. Someone at the University of Southern Mississippi revealed that she had given the University her entire life savings of $150,000 to establish a scholarship fund for needy African-American students.

When she was in 6th-grade, Osceola McCarty left school to help care for a sick aunt. She helped her mother and grandmother with the family’s backyard laundry business.

Over a lifetime, she saved nickels and dimes from washing and drying clothes. She never married or had children of her own, and at 87 was crippled with arthritis. She decided to let the young “have the chance I didn’t have.” Osceola McCarty scholarships are now given to high school graduates who otherwise would not be able to attend college. Her gift has inspired many others to perform acts of generosity. But it confused some people. She was often asked, “Why didn’t you spend the money on yourself?” She answered simply, “I am spending it on myself.”⁴

**Maria Goretti.** The third story is about a young girl, Maria Goretti. She was born in 1890, one of five children, into a very poor family of Italian farmers. She was devoted to her family and her faith, walking a long distance to the nearest town to learn her Catechism. She,
her parents, and her siblings lived and worked in the house of their landlord, a mean, brutal, and vulgar man. He had a teenage son, Alessandro, who was quiet and acted strange.

One day, when Alessandro was 18 and Maria was 11, she was cleaning his room and was shocked to see dirty pictures he had put up on his wall. She confronted him: How dare he do this, with children about? Alessandro responded angrily: “If you don’t like them, don’t look at them!”

As Maria grew in goodness, Alessandro grew in surliness and lust. One day he said dirty things to her, and she darted away. He said, “If you tell your mother, I will kill you.”

Then one day when Maria was 12, Alessandro came in from the fields and ordered her to go with him into the kitchen. She refused. He grabbed her and dragged her, making his intentions clear. He held a knife in his hand and said he would kill her if she did not submit to his advances. Maria shouted, “No! Alessandro, it is a sin! God doesn’t want it!”

Enraged by her resistance, Alessandro stabbed her 14 times. Her heart, lungs, and intestines were pierced. A team of doctors performed surgery in a desperate effort to try to save her, but her wounds were too great. She managed to live for another 24 hours. Before dying, she forgave her attacker, saying, “I want Alessandro to be with me in heaven.”

Alessandro was convicted and sent to prison. Ten years later, he reported that he saw Maria in a vision, broke down, and repented of his crime.5

What made Viktor Frankl, Osceola McCarty, and Maria Goretti persons of character?

They each endured adversity and suffering but did not become bitter or feel sorry for themselves. Instead, they focused on the needs of others. They each had a generosity of spirit, a largeness of soul. They had an unshakeable sense of who they were, and consequently had the courage of their convictions. They all found their life’s meaning in being true to their deepest values and beliefs, no matter what the cost.

Every one of us has this capacity for goodness. Each of us is called to become a person of character, to develop our talents and virtues and use them to serve others and make a positive difference in the world.

If you strive each day to be a person of character—the best person you can be—you’ll be able to look yourself in the mirror and see someone you respect. You won’t have to lie to your parents or anyone else about what you’re doing. You can go to sleep with a clear conscience.

Becoming a person of character isn’t easy. We all experience many failures. We are all a work in progress. Here is the most important point I would like you to remember: Striving to be a person of character is one of the surest ways to lead a happy life. Not a life without any suffering, but a fulfilling life, one that has dignity, worth, and meaning because you are trying to become all you that were meant to be.

A Personal Mission Statement. Let me share with you something that many young people have found helpful in trying to be the best person they can be: writing a personal mission statement. A mission statement expresses what you see as your purpose in life and how you want to live your life. Here is a mission statement written by a high school boy:
• Have confidence in yourself and everyone else around you.
• Be kind, courteous, and respectful to all people.
• Set reachable goals; never lose sight of them.
• Never take the simple things in life for granted.
• Appreciate other people’s differences.
• Ask questions.
• Remember that before you can change someone else, you must first change yourself.
• Speak with your actions.
• Make time to help the less fortunate and those who are having a bad day.
• Read this mission statement every day.

A 16-year-old girl spoke about the difference that writing a mission statement made in her life:

Last year I couldn’t concentrate on anything because I had a boyfriend. I wanted to do everything for him to make him happy. Then, naturally, the subject of sex came up. I wasn’t at all prepared for it, and it became a nagging, constant thing on my mind. I felt like I wasn’t ready and that I didn’t want to have sex—but everybody else kept saying, “Just do it.”

Then I participated in a character development class at school where they taught me to write a mission statement. I started to write and kept on writing and writing. It gave me a direction and a focus, and I felt like I had a plan and a reason for doing what I was doing. It really helped me stick to my standards.

Loving Relationships

The second secret of a happy life is loving relationships. We are made for relationships. As Mother Teresa put it, “We are created to love, and to be loved.”

What enables us to develop loving relationships—with our friends, our parents, our siblings, our schoolmates, and, for most of us, the person we will someday marry?

The same qualities that make us persons of character also make us able to give and receive love. Qualities such as respect for self and others, unselfishness, generosity, integrity, the ability to see and bring out the good in other people, the ability to forgive others for their faults and failings, and the capacity to endure pain and hardship and not give up.
These are the virtues, the strengths of character, that make us capable of “real love.” These are the qualities that make for a happy marriage. Marriage is challenging. It takes character to make it lasting and good. If either you or your spouse lack good character, you are going to have a very hard time making a happy and lasting marriage.

Let me ask: How many of you would like to be married some day? How many of you would like to find the right person to marry—someone who will respect and cherish you, someone you can trust not to cheat on you, someone who will be a loving and responsible father or mother to your children, someone whose love you can count on in good times and bad? If you want to marry that kind of person, you’re looking for a person of character. How can you find such a person?

A Character Check List

Here’s one tip: Use a “character test” with anyone you date or are starting to get serious about. You can add your own items, but here are some of the ones I would include on the test:

1. How does this person treat me—with kindness and courtesy, or something less? Do they ever shove, shake, hit, or in other ways bully me?

2. Are they self-centered, always expecting to get their own way?

3. Do they bring out the best in me, or the worst in me? Do I feel happy after spending time with them? Do they make me angry? Make me cry?

4. Do they respect my values, and never pressure me to do something I think is wrong? Do they share my values and respect my limits concerning sex?

5. Are they overly jealous and possessive? Do they keep me from spending time with my family and friends?

6. Do they tell the truth, or lie to me and others? How much do I trust them?

7. Do they have good judgment? Use drugs or alcohol? Look at pornography?

8. How do they treat and talk about their parents? How do they treat and talk about my parents and other members of my family?

9. How do they treat their friends? My friends? Do they spread stories and rumors about other people?

10. Are they hard workers? Can you depend on them to do what they say?

11. Are they patient and forgiving—able to make up quickly after an argument?

12. If faith is important in my life, is it important in theirs?

13. Would I be proud to call them my husband or wife?

14. Would they be a good role model for my children—an example of good character? Would I want my kids to grow up to be like them?
If a person gets low marks on questions like these, don’t waste time on that relationship. Don’t think, “Maybe they’ll change eventually, especially if we get married.” People who have serious character deficiencies are very often worse after they get married.

I once counseled a 19-year-old girl who was engaged to a guy who was extremely possessive, abused alcohol, got into fights when he was drunk, and once knocked her part way down a flight of stairs. I urged her to reconsider her intention to marry this guy, given all these danger signals. I asked her what qualities she admired in him and he in her. She couldn’t name anything specific but insisted that they loved each other. They went ahead with the marriage, and it was a disaster. Soon after, he became more possessive than ever and took to hitting her whenever he drank heavily. She fled in terror and went to live in another city to try to get away from him.

What is the best way to find a person who gets high marks on your character test? Answer: Become that kind of a person yourself. Whatever qualities you admire in other people, strive to develop those qualities in yourself. Make a sincere effort to become the best person you can be. Good character attracts good character. If you focus on improving yourself, developing your own gifts and good qualities, you’ll become an attractive person, and you’ll be more likely to attract a person of character, of the sort you’d like to spend your life with.

But What If We Really Love Each Other?

What if you’re in a relationship with a person who gets high grades on your character test, and you have strong feelings for each other. It feels like “real love.” You begin to wonder, “What’s wrong with having sex if we really love each other?”

That leads to another basic question: What is real love? What does it mean to really, truly love another person?

Let me share another story that shed some light on this question of the meaning of real love. A few years ago I spoke in Canada at a conference for parents. In one of the discussion groups, a mother told other parents about a situation she was facing with her 16-year-old daughter, Lisa. For the past year, Lisa had been dating a boy David, who was nearly three years older. Lisa had recently come to her mother and said, "David and I feel we're ready to have sex."

The mother was stunned. She replied, "But, Lisa, sex is meant for love." Lisa said, "But, Mom, we do love each other, and this is how we want to express it." The mother said she found herself at a loss for words.

What would you say to Lisa if you were the mom? Someday, most of you will have children of your own. You will have to decide what to say to them about sex and love and marriage.

Lisa gave her mother an opening when she said, “But, Mom, we do love each other.” The mother could have replied:
Lisa, first of all, let me say that I understand the depth of your feelings for David. I remember the first time I felt those feelings as a young person. They are very strong.

I also am very grateful you came to talk to me about this. I take that as a sign of your respect and trust. Thank you for that.

You say that you and David love each other very much. Let’s talk for a minute about love. What does it mean to really love another person?

Love means wanting what is best for the other person, seeking the greatest good for that person. How do you know when somebody really loves you? When they want what is truly best for your welfare, your happiness—not just now, but forever.

So the question you have to ask yourself is this: Is having sex with someone you aren’t married to an act of real love?

One way to answer that question is to ask, what are the consequences that can come from sex between unmarried persons? Pregnancy is one. Sexually transmitted disease is another. Emotional hurt, which can last a very long time, is a third. What if you and David break up someday and you’re left with regret? If we really love another person and want what is truly best for them, would we subject them to these risks? Would we gamble with their health, happiness, and future?

If Lisa and her mother shared religious belief, it would also be appropriate to bring that into the conversation. In fact, the family was Catholic. Lisa’s mother might have said:

Have you and David asked yourselves, “Is this what God wants us to do? What does our faith teach about sex outside of marriage?” If you and David were to pray about this, what answer do you think you would get?

These are some of the questions the mom could have asked Lisa to help her think deeply about the meaning of real love—and the right decision in her relationship with David.

Bottom line: The loving decision is the one that is truly best for the other person, now and in the future. If you’re subjecting another person to dangers like pregnancy, disease, a broken heart, or a guilty conscience, you’re not really thinking of their happiness or welfare. When people say, “I love you, let’s have sex,” what they really mean is, “I love me, and I want to do this, even if it might end up hurting you.”

**Breaking Up Is Hard to Do**

“Okay,” you might be thinking, “I can see all the reasons to wait, or to start over if I haven’t waited until now. But I’m in a relationship with somebody who doesn’t see it that
way.” Part of finding real love is getting out of relationships that are not based on real love. Here is the story of Sue, a girl who faced that challenge:

My decision not to have sex wasn’t difficult in middle school, but when I entered high school, it definitely became more of an issue. A lot more of my friends began to have sex with older guys.

I had the same boyfriend all the way through high school, plus my first year of college. Instead of having to say no to a lot of guys, I just had to say no to him. But I almost gave in a few times because I was sooooo sick of having the same argument over and over. It was like, “Fine, whatever, I’ll do it.” But then I would stop myself. Finally, I realized it was an unhealthy, immature relationship, and I found the courage to end it.

I am 19 now, and I have never regretted my decision. I have a new boyfriend who totally respects my values, and we have a wonderful relationship. If there is a girl out there who is struggling with the decision to wait, I would say hold to your beliefs. If your friends or boyfriend don’t respect that decision, they’re not your friends.

Sue concludes her story by listing what she says have been the benefits of waiting:

1. I haven’t had the worries many of my friends have about pregnancy and disease.
2. I’ve escaped the emotional traumas I’ve seen a number of my friends go through.
4. I have a tremendous amount of self-respect.
5. I don’t have a reputation for being “easy.”
6. I know my decision is pleasing to God and my family.
7. I will be able to give the person I marry a gift that no one else will ever have.

What if you’re in an abusive or threatening relationship and afraid of what the person might do if you break up with them? In his book, The 6 Most Important Decisions You’ll Ever Make (which contains a lot of true stories about teens and great tips on making good decisions), Sean Covey tells the story of Bill and Jen:

Bill had been verbally abusive, putting Jen down and making her cry a lot. She knew she had to break it off. He was alone in his grandmother’s house when she came by with his sweater and CD case. He knew immediately she was there to break up. When he opened the door, he grabbed her by the hair, pushed her up against the door, and called her terrible names.

Covey points out that Jen made three mistakes in her plan to break up with Bill:

- She went alone.
- She met him in a private place.
- She underestimated what he was capable of.
A safer plan: Do it on the phone, not in person. And talk to your family ahead of time and get their support.

How Far Is Too Far?

Discussions of sex and love often talk a lot about intercourse but not much about how far you should go if you don’t go all the way. But that’s obviously a crucial question. A high school counselor offers this wise advice: "If you don’t want to drive over a cliff, don’t pull up to the edge and race the engine." Here are some specific guidelines; you’re going too far when:

- either a guy’s or a girl’s hands start roaming
- either of you starts to remove clothing (One girl said she always remembered her grandmother’s rule: “Keep all of your clothes on all of the time.”)
- you are doing something you would not want to be doing around someone you really respect (Would you be doing this if your mother were there?)
- you are arousing physical feelings that will undermine your ability to make a good decision.

Saving sex for marriage means saving all of it for marriage. All forms of sexual intimacy are "the language of marriage."

After a talk I gave recently, a young woman in her 20s came up and said:

I'm going with this guy and we’re getting serious, but I still don’t know if he’s the one. The other night we were kissing, and it started to get heavy. I pulled back and said, ‘Whoa—I want to save this for my husband.”

She realized that physical affection of this kind is meant to be part of the gift of love that you give to one person in the unique relationship of marriage.

In her book, Keep Love Real, Filipino author Lora Tan-Garcia offers this helpful advice:

If you’re a guy, ask yourself, “Do I want some other guy putting his hands all over my future wife?” Then don’t put your hands all over someone else’s future wife. Same for women. Love each other enough, so that if you do not end up together, you can be proud that you preserved each other’s dignity.

Keep in mind that living a chaste life is much more than not having sexual intercourse. As one speaker puts it, “You can refrain from sex and still be unchaste by looking at pornography, wearing skimpy clothes, or giving in to masturbation, passionate making-out, petting, or oral sex. Chastity is way of living, of honoring the gift of your sexuality.” It’s a lifestyle that embraces purity of mind, heart, and body.
How Can Premarital Sex Hurt My Chances of a Happy Marriage?

Most of you dream of finding real love in a happy marriage. So it makes sense to ask yourselves, “What sexual decisions at this point in my life will help me realize my dream of a loving and happy marriage? What problems might I cause for myself or future spouse by being sexually intimate before marriage?” Here are four such problems:

Comparisons and flashbacks. If you have had sex with someone other than your marriage partner, there may be a tendency, sometimes beyond your control, to compare your spouse with previous partners. Says one young husband: ”When I make love with my wife, I think, ‘My old girlfriend could kiss better,’ or ‘This girl could do that better.’ I can’t get rid of the comparisons.” Both men and women may also experience “sexual flashbacks”—mental images of previous partners—that can disrupt marital sexual intimacy.

Infidelity. Adultery can end a marriage. Many experts believe that infidelity on the part of both sexes has risen in recent decades. If people haven’t practiced sexual restraint before marriage, it will likely be harder for them to resist sexual temptations after marriage. Says one wife: ”When I think of how Mike and I were sexually involved when I was his secretary, it makes me wonder what he would do now if he met somebody he was very much attracted to.” Studies in the Journal of Marriage and the Family find that persons who are sexually active before marriage are in fact more likely to be unfaithful to their spouse after marriage.

Infertility. Many newly married couples cannot conceive a baby. Infertility can cause tremendous stress on a marriage. If it was caused by a sexually transmitted disease such as chlamydia, the stress is even greater.

A greater chance of divorce. Researchers have found that living together before marriage is associated with a greater risk of divorce. Sex before marriage can keep you from getting to know your prospective mate in a deep way and finding out whether you have the shared beliefs, values, and goals on which a lasting marriage can be built. John and Kathy Colligan, who have spent many years counseling couples preparing for marriage, offer their observations:

We see many engaged couples who are living together. We find out by talking with them that they haven’t discussed their values and goals. When we suggest that they not live or sleep together, that they try to become friends and get to know each other to find out if they’re really compatible, they often resist. We can see that this is a marriage likely to fail—and time after time, it does.

The facts contradict the popular idea that living together would serve as a kind of “trial marriage” that would help a couple test their compatibility. If you really want to get to know somebody and find out whether you want to spend your life with that person, sex can make that harder, not easier, to do.
Some Final Tips

I’ve shared with you a way of thinking about sexual intimacy that I hope will help you develop your character, exercise sexual self-discipline, and prepare yourself for a deep, loving relationship as an adult. But in addition to good reasons for waiting, you also need a plan—practical steps that will help you stick to your decision. Here are some tips:

1. Practice modesty in your speech, dress, and actions.

2. Date only people who share your values, and date in groups rather than singly. Avoid sexual temptation such as time together alone.

3. Find at least one good friend who has made the commitment to live a chaste life and support each other in that decision.

4. Avoid sexual stimuli such as most "R"-rated movies.

5. Limit your physical affection to light hugs and kisses.


7. If you believe in God, ask God in your prayer time for help in leading a chaste life. Keep in mind the words of Mother Teresa: “Purity is the fruit of prayer.”

Finally, keep in mind the big vision of what you’re waiting for: Sex is so special it deserves a special home. It’s most meaningful, most joyful, most fulfilling, when it’s part of something bigger—a continuing, loving relationship between two human beings. When you’re married, your sexual intimacy expresses your total commitment to each other. You’re saying with your body, “I give myself to you, completely.” The ultimate intimacy belongs within the ultimate commitment.

As ancient wisdom reminds us, “Love is patient, love is kind.” Real love always wants what is best for another person. Real love never demands something that will harm you or the person you love.

All good things are worth waiting for. Waiting until marriage to have sex is a rational, mature decision to control your desires. If you are getting to know someone—or are in a relationship—remember: If it’s real love, love waits.
NOTES


2 Tony Devine, et al., Cultivating Heart and Character. (Chapel Hill, NC: Character Development Group, 2000).


4 The accounts of the lives of Viktor Frankl and Osceola McCarty are adapted from Kevin Ryan’s and Karen Bohlin’s book, Building Character in Schools (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999).

5 Based on Mary Reed Newland’s account in The Saints and Our Children. (Rockford, IL: Tan Publishers, 1958).

6 Sean Covey, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens (New York: Fireside, 1998).

7 Adapted from Sean Covey, The 6 Most Important Decisions You’ll Ever Make. (New York: Fireside Books, 2006).

8 Lora Tan-Garcia, Keep Love Real. (University of Asia and the Pacific, 2007).

9 Thanks to Father David Pivonka for this quote.
