True Love Waits Update

Trends in Relationships

True Love Waits blog addresses current issues and provides updated information and commentary about the student sexual-abstinence movement. Here's a sample post from Bob Bunn in Student Ministry Publishing.

USA Today recently ran this article describing the somewhat contradictory relationship culture faced by young adults, especially on college campuses. In many cases, sexual hook-ups—sexual relationships with zero responsibility or commitment—are commonplace. As one girl puts it, “With the people that I know, there is a fair share of hooking up just to have sex, and the intention is to only do it once and possibly never see that person again... I know a few girls who would like to hook up every weekend, but sometimes the opportunity doesn’t present itself. They call that an ‘unlucky night.’”

As student leaders and parents, here are a few ideas and talking points we can use to help our teens and young adults move toward a more biblical understanding of relationships.

Commitment vs. Competition. The USA Today article states that most college campuses have more female students than male students. That leads to a competition for companionship among female students. Mark Regnerus, a researcher at the University of Texas, stated, “The women wind up competing with each other for access to the men, and often, that means relationships become sexual quicker.”

What We Can Do: Remind our young people not only that sex is reserved for a marriage relationship, but also that they don’t have to take a backseat to anyone. Genuine, fulfilling relationships won’t be found in a competitive culture, and, as individuals created in God’s image, they are worth more than that.

Putting the Cart Before the Horse. Researchers are finding that the hook-up culture is reversing the traditional pattern of relationships. Young people once spent time getting to know someone (through courting or dating), then determined if the relationship needed to go deeper. Now, they go “deeper” (in the form of sexual intimacy) first and let that determine if “dating” happens. One student noted, “In a big way, hookups have kind of taken the place of—not exactly eclipsed—relationships,
but hooking up is kind of an easier way for college students to act on their sexual desire without making a big commitment.”

What We Can Do: Remind our teens that genuine relationships aren’t built in a day—or in a one-night stand. Encourage them to invest in other people, to be givers rather than takers. Challenge them to proclaim their value, while valuing others at the same time.

You Are Not Alone. True Love Waits was established, in part, to provide a voice for teenagers who wanted to stay pure until marriage, but felt muted or alone in their efforts. The campaign was designed to help these young people know that they were not alone in standing for purity. One bright spot found in the USA Today article revealed that the numbers of students claiming to be virgins is on the rise—even on college campuses. “Personally, a lot of my friends at school have had sex,” one student told the paper. “As many, if not more, haven’t.”

What We Can Do: In today’s hook-up culture, the message that teens are not alone again needs to be proclaimed. We can encourage them to stand together by providing support and accountability. We also can help them stay pure the right way and for the right reasons. While the article raises the possibility that pornography is “helping” students stay abistent, parents and leaders can point their teens toward the true reason for staying pure—the glory of God.

Let us hear from you: What is your reaction to the USA Today article? What sticks out to you and how can we respond as Christian parents and student leaders?

National Youth Workers Conference

LifeWay Christian Resources will hold its annual National Youth Workers Conference Sept. 12-14 in Nashville, Tenn. The three-day event is designed to provide inspiration, encouragement, and practical how-to’s focused on equipping youth workers to develop students, not just student ministries. The conference fee is $125.

Speakers include Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources and his son Jess; Pete Wilson, founding pastor of Cross Point Community Church; and songwriter, author and worship leader Kelly Minter. Participants also will hear from “The Skit Guys” Tommy Woodard and Eddie James, who communicate God’s Word and impact lives through comedy, drama, and teaching. Worship will be led by the Chris White Band.

In addition to plenary sessions, there are 18 different conference sessions from which to choose. For more information or to register, visit www.LifeWay.com/LNYWC.

Members of Congress Urge Restoring Abstinence Education Funding

Last month Baptist Press ran a story about a bipartisan coalition of 40 members of Congress that is urging the House Appropriations Committee to devote at least half of sex education funds to abstinence education in the 2012 federal budget.

In a letter to House Appropriations Committee Chair Harold Rogers and ranking member Norman Dicks, coalition members wrote, “Federal
community-based abstinence education programs are strongly supported by parents and 22 separate studies have demonstrated their effectiveness. Unfortunately, funding for these programs was eliminated in [fiscal year 2010] and [fiscal year 2011]... Therefore, unless a unique program is reestablished that prioritizes the risk avoidance abstinence message, adolescents will be largely without access to the tools they need to delay sexual activity.”

True Love Waits Co-founder Jimmy Hester was quoted in the article: “Students are bombarded daily with messages that promote pre-marital sexual activity. It is encouraging that these members of Congress recognize how vitally important it is to give young people a positive message about the benefits of remaining abstinent until marriage. What our youth need today is less sex education and more love education.”

which would include lessons on how to use a condom and the appropriate age for starting sex, is part of a larger effort to “improve outcomes” for minority students.

While officials maintain that parents can have their children opt out of sessions on birth control, many spiritual leaders have expressed concern over the lack of parental input allowed in the plan. They contend that sex education primarily belongs in the home and that parents should control the information their children receive.

True Love Waits agrees, which is why Path of Purity: A Family Guide debuted last fall. Path of Purity addresses the various development stages and milestone events of a child’s life and encourages parents to use those opportunities to instill a biblical perspective on sexuality. With New York City’s decision (and others that no doubt will follow), parental influence in every area of life—including sexuality—is becoming much more important. True Love Waits 3.0 is committed to help through resources like Path of Purity.

Sources:


True Love Waits Co-founder Jimmy Hester was quoted in the article: “Students are bombarded daily with messages that promote pre-marital sexual activity. It is encouraging that these members of Congress recognize how vitally important it is to give young people a positive message about the benefits of remaining abstinent until marriage. What our youth need today is less sex education and more love education.”