

“If You Really Loved Me, You Would...”

If your best friend wants you to do something you know is wrong, how can you stand up for your own beliefs?



Several young people have written to ask: “My boyfriend [or girl friend] wants me to have sex with him [or her]. I don’t want to, but I want to keep the friendship. How can I say no in such a way that he [or she] will understand I mean it? I want my friend to stop bothering me, to stop asking for sex.”

In past ages, and in some societies today, almost everyone agreed that sex before marriage was wrong. Guys and girls, if they wanted to avoid sex, could count on their friends to back them up in their decision.

But in Western society today, premarital sex has become so common that it’s becoming harder to find friends who agree with right moral principles. It’s getting harder to say no. Therefore, it’s even more important to know *why* you should say no.

What About Love?

Sexual pressure is often the greatest when it’s confused with love. Is sex OK when you’re in love? Many teens who want sex say it is OK if you’re in love, and many are quick to call their feelings “love” to try to make sex OK. But it’s not OK.

You need to know why, and you need, perhaps soon, to know how to say no despite the pressure you will feel to give in. And you need to mean it, believe it and say it in such a way that your friends know exactly where you stand.

Say you don’t want sex. Say it firmly. Make it clear. A nasty and false rumor says that girls secretly enjoy sex even if they “pretend” they don’t want to have sex. The result is that thousands of women have been raped by their dates.

The quicker you say “No, absolutely not,” the quicker the pressure will stop. If you don’t sound very certain, you’ll be asked again and again. And if you say, “I don’t want to yet,” you’ll be asked again—soon—to see if you have changed your mind.

A lot of premarital sex happens without anyone ever asking. Guys and girls simply get pretty heavy into kissing and feeling and somehow it happens without either per-

son saying anything about it until after it's over.

That's too late, gang! It's important to say no before either of you starts to get sexually aroused. Avoid temptation. Stay around other people. That means don't pair off alone to hug and kiss.

The boy usually gets aroused first, probably before the girl realizes it. So, guys, if you do, you should stop. But, girls, often the guy does not stop, so you'll have to say no to any act that's likely to make matters worse. Remember, stopping is a lot harder than saying no in the first place.

It's not easy to say no. It may seem like you're insulting your date. Explain that the reason you are saying no is you *do* respect your date. Then don't let yourself be talked out of your decision.

Some girls seem to think that they aren't attractive unless they can get guys' sexual attention. Such girls may get attention, but the attention doesn't mean the guys think they are beautiful. Guys are attracted to them because they are easy marks, not because they think they are especially pretty. Getting that kind of attention isn't worth how rotten you're going to feel later for giving in.

"If You Loved Me . . ."

One of the most common "lines" or arguments is that "if you loved me, you wouldn't say no." The idea seems to be that you would do anything, no matter how stupid, immoral or illegal, just because you "love" someone. Nonsense!

If a person really loves you, cares about your feelings, he or she won't pressure you to do anything you should not. If your friend would desert you for not having sex, he or she isn't much of a friend. If sex is more important

than friendship, it's too important, and you don't need that kind of friend.

It's OK to love someone without jumping into bed with him or her. You should love people who will never be a sex partner. Love and sex are two quite different things. If your friend doesn't understand the difference, he or she doesn't even understand what true love is, and certainly does not love you.

If all your friends are sexually active, or want to be, it's going to affect you. Studies have shown that if your friends are sexually active, you are much more likely to become sexually active also. So look at



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your friends. If you don't want to be like them, find some new friends whom you can respect.

If most of your dates seem to want sex, you need to ask yourself why. Do you act or dress in such a way as to be attractive to the wrong type? Where do you meet your friends? Does your behavior on a date encourage sexual interest?

Most young people don't choose their friends—they just happen. If you want to change, you'll have to work at it, and it will take time.

People in business are often advised to surround themselves with successful men and women as friends, and they will also learn to become successful.

In a similar way, if you surround yourself with people who

are always getting themselves and you in trouble, you will soon think that is a normal way of life and you'll live the same way.

Surround yourself with friends who are honest, loyal, hardworking—who have a lot of common sense—and you will also develop this kind of character. And you will be the kind of friend they will want to be with.

Sex Belongs in Marriage

Here are more reasons to say no to premarital sex—worry about pregnancy or sexually transmitted

diseases. Be warned, though: If those are the only reasons you have, the pressure will get pretty intense if your date has a condom and starts talking about "safe sex."

Pregnancy and disease—although both are extremely serious problems—aren't the main reasons premarital sex is wrong. Many sexually active teenagers somehow avoid those problems, but that doesn't make it right. It's wrong for everyone—guy or girl, young or old—whether a person gets "caught" or not.

Sex was designed by the Creator God to help husbands and wives stay close together—physically and emotionally. Any other use, any premarital use of sex, makes sex less effective in what it was designed to do.

That's one of the reasons so many marriages are breaking up today. No one can avoid the automatic penalty.

All of you want a happy, successful marriage someday. Well, if you do, remember sex should be saved for marriage. I hope you know that, and make sure your dates know it too.

By the way, we have prepared a reprint of an article on this subject titled "Are You Sure Everybody's Doing It?" We offer it to you free of charge if you write in and request it. □

Q I'm 13 years old in about a week. A real cute boy in school asked me to a movie, but my parents say no—that I'm too young to date. I don't see how dating this boy can hurt anything. What do you think?

A The other girls are too young for boyfriends—if by that they mean guys they feel they are in love with or steady dates.

Sadly, it is a type of status symbol to have a boyfriend or girl friend since it "proves" that you are desir-

cumstances. We then advise dating in groups, attending wholesome activities where young people can get acquainted. And we further believe dating in the teen years should not be steady and serious, leading young people to think of marriage before they are mentally, financially, educationally and in every other way ready.

With that in mind we can discuss age difference. There is

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

A Parents and teens often disagree about the best age to start dating. Ever wonder why? The reason is that parents and teens look at dating differently. Teens view dating simply as a chance to have fun at some activity in the company of someone of the opposite sex. Parents view dating as a complex social relationship, accompanied by emotions and physical pulls that require a great amount of maturity to be handled properly.

To be frank, the parents' view is the more realistic one. With the newfound emotion of sexual awareness does not automatically come either the knowledge or character to properly channel those feelings.

To gain the proper knowledge, a young teenager must learn by reading and listening to his or her parents. Character also comes with time.

When each individual teen should begin to date is a decision that should be left to parents who have good judgment based on an understanding of the human mind as explained in the Bible. Perhaps the age will vary for each individual, but pre-high school graduate teens usually profit more from group dating or social events than pairing off by themselves at unsupervised activities.

Q I am 14 years old and I have a big problem. All the other girls at school have boyfriends and I don't. My dad tells me not to worry because I am too young for that sort of thing anyway. But that doesn't help me feel better, because if my girl friends aren't too young, why am I?

able to the opposite sex. But this generally means facing the pressures of dating, especially dating only one person, that often lead to sexual experimentation and all its harmful consequences.

Of course, it may be that you and these girls use the term *boyfriend* for any boy you like as a friend and sit next to in history class. It is, of course, natural to like some guys more than others.

But if the guys are not now finding you extremely interesting, you really don't need to worry. You still are quite young, and if the guys were too interested, you'd probably eventually wish that they hadn't been—that you hadn't been pressured to grow up too fast.

Besides, in time—at the time you are old enough to begin an ideal marriage, we hope—you almost certainly will attract the interest of a number of men, some of whom you will also be attracted to. If you're developing your character and personality now, you can count on it.

Q Is it a bad idea to date someone younger than you?

Q [or] Is it OK for a guy to date a girl two or three years older than he is?

A First realize that we advocate dating only when parents and family agree on the proper age and other cir-

obviously nothing wrong with spending time with a boy or a girl a few months or a year younger than you. But problems develop when a young man about 21 or 22 wants to date a 15- or 16-year-old girl. He naturally wants to start thinking more seriously, while she is not yet ready to assume the responsibilities of marriage and family.

When a person reaches a more mature age of the early 20s, an age difference of a few years doesn't matter much at all. There are many successful marriages where the wife is a few years older than her husband. And certainly many marriages take place where the man is older.

DATING, KISSING & SEX

Perhaps you've asked yourself some of these questions: What's the right age to begin dating? What about age differences? Is kissing OK? What about necking and petting?

But while you are a teen, keep your dating to those in your own age bracket. You'll be preparing to make a mature decision when you are older.

Q Is kissing wrong for teenagers?

A We'll go way out on a limb on this one. Our mailboxes may be jammed to overflowing, since many of you are going to disagree. But we will not dodge issues. Here is the plain truth on this subject.

Kissing was designed by God to be a manner in which a husband and wife express their love for one another. It is part of the sexual stimulus and response mechanism that belongs in the wholesomeness of sex within marriage.

By no means does kissing have to always lead to sexual activity, but it is a manner of expressing love and feeling. If it weren't that way, it wouldn't be fun. Kissing one you love is fun and exciting. It's designed by God that way.

But romantic kissing is not for teens.

Of course family members show affection for one another by kissing. But there is an obvious difference between a boy kissing his mom good-bye before leaving for the evening and the way he may romantically want to kiss his girl friend.

A sister may give a congratulatory kiss for something her brother accomplished. That's perfectly normal. Children kiss their parents and grandparents. All well and good.

But kissing passionately and romantically on teenage dates? It simply shouldn't be done. If that sounds like we live in another century, well, that's just the way it will have to sound. Save romantic kissing for the proper time and the right person in your life. You'll always be glad you did!

(For a fuller explanation of the role of kissing, and of the whole subject of love, marriage and sex,

“I know it's wrong to 'go all the way' on dates, but what about necking?”

ask for your free copy of our book, *The Missing Dimension in Sex*. (See the back cover for the address nearest you.)

Q I know that it is wrong to “go all the way” on a date, but my boyfriend and I like to neck because we care for each other. Is just necking or petting wrong?

A Yes, and here's why. Many people think necking and petting are in a totally separate category than “going all the way” and that therefore they are OK even though total intercourse is not. This reasoning is wrong.

The sex act is not merely intercourse. It is a whole series of events that begins with the first intimacy and includes necking and petting as much as the final act. Therefore these sexual activities do break the biblical command against fornication and are harmful.

Why? God's law is for our good, and the commandments against premarital sex are for our good also.

The crux of the matter is that marriage—to be successful—must be founded on the special feelings two people have for each other alone.

To experiment with premarital sex on dates makes sex no longer unique between a person and his

or her future mate, and hence weakens the marital bond even though marriage may come years later.

And, in addition, it can spread sexually transmissible diseases, cause unwanted pregnancies, create the flow of powerful emotions teenagers are not equipped to handle and divert one's attention from studies and career planning into daydreaming about romance and sex.

Finally, it creates a sort of sexual infatuation with another person that clouds one's thinking and may make him or her marry simply for sexual gratification rather than true love. Many, many marriages end in divorce because the parties married the wrong person simply out of the emotional turmoil caused by sexual experimentation.

Q I am not a teenager, but am a mother of several teenage girls. I've read your articles saying premarital sex is wrong and I agree. But in this world I think that boys sometimes feel this applies to girls only, but not to them. It is a double standard.

A You are undoubtedly correct. A double standard does exist in the minds of many in our world today. They condemn girls for promiscuity, but chuckle or at least tolerate the boys doing these things.

Therefore let all teens, both girls and boys, read this and think about it. Premarital sex is harmful and a sin. It is a sin for both girls and guys in equal degree. And it absolutely is harmful to both sexes.

Any young man who feels that he can engage in premarital sex less wrongfully or with less harm psychologically than a girl is kidding himself and is dead wrong. Common sense tells us that, if anything, since man is often the aggressor, the male is the most to blame.

Perhaps this one statement won't set straight this misconception completely, but we hope it will be a start. □

“What After You’ve Made Mistakes?”

One young woman wrote that she had made a terrible mistake, immediately regretted it and now hates herself for it. She feels ashamed, dirty, scarred for life. She can't forgive herself and she's not sure God has forgiven her either.

She's too ashamed to tell her parents, doesn't want to hurt them, and she worries about what her future husband will think. She's scared and miserable and wishes the whole experience were a nightmare that would go away.

Every one of us has in one way or another amassed a huge debt of sin to Almighty God. And some, unlike this contrite young woman, have repeated the same sins over and over.

Are there some sins that are even too terrible for God to forgive? No, Jesus Christ's death can free us from the torment of guilt, from the penalty of our sinful deeds—all of them. He died for all the sins of every human being who ever lived or will live. The death of God's only Son paid the enormous price for our breaking of God's good and righteous commandments.

What Must We Do?

But to receive that forgiveness from God, there is something we must do. First, repent of the sin we have committed and second, have faith in God's forgiveness. What does it mean to repent? Repentance is a change of mind and attitude. It's a complete about-face from our

sinful actions of the past. It's not just feeling sorry for what we've done because we don't like to suffer the effects of our actions. Repentance means we're sick of what we've done, so sick of it we're determined *never* to repeat it.

I believe the young woman who wrote that letter is repentant because she not only sees how wretched her mistake was, she has not repeated her sin. That's true repentance. Her attitude toward God is to never again break his commandment against sex before marriage. Perhaps



she sees that she has sinned against her Creator even more than against herself and those closest to her. God stands ready to forgive all the sins of a person in that frame of mind.

But the second condition is to believe God, to believe that Jesus Christ's sacrifice of his very life is altogether sufficient to pay the penalty of your sins.

Some day, when this teenage girl is ready to make a real, lasting spiritual commitment in her life, she will have to come to complete reliance on the living Jesus Christ as her personal Savior. Every sin that she has ever committed will be completely forgiven by God, and she will be given the power of God's Holy Spirit to help her keep his laws.

God doesn't want us to have to suffer as this young woman has because of sin. That's why his commandments are there to protect us from hurting ourselves

provide her with a kind and understanding husband.

And, remember, there's no double standard with God. No young man who has carelessly cast his virginity aside can expect and insist that his wife should not have made a sexual mistake. God doesn't overlook sexual sins in young men while horribly punishing young women for the same sins. Women have just as much right to expect virginity in their future husbands as men do in their future wives.

No sin—no matter how ugly—will ever be held against you if you repent of it toward God. You can count on him. He will not withhold that forgiveness he has promised. When you really repent—and remember what the definition of repentance is—you are at that very moment forgiven.

A Most Merciful Father

We have a most merciful heavenly Father, literally filled with the spirit of forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

So to that young woman who wrote in, and to all who have made similar mistakes, believe God's promises and know he wants more than anything to forgive you. He's more than willing to help us all straighten out the sordid messes we human beings bring on ourselves.

Don't allow past mistakes to keep you from pressing ahead to live your life as closely within God's laws as you are able, so that you may live the happy, successful life he has in mind for you. □