



Here is a recent question I received from a college girl:

What reasons can I give to my boyfriend for waiting until marriage to have a sexual relationship? Although he has been with other girls in the past, he is now willing to wait but lacks formation and wants reasons in order to understand it better. He already knows church teaching about the sacrament of marriage and the importance of openness to life.

There are various angles from which one could take this but since he is already aware of Church teachings but apparently has not fully embraced them, I began to explain the importance of virtue:

Virtue and self mastery are essential foundations in order to build a relationship of love. If you want to be patient, you need to forge understanding, acceptance and maybe biting your tongue! With time and work you will develop good habits and eventually self mastery.

We know that love is not just about sex. It involves the whole person and a person is not just their body, they also have a soul. Man is a person with an “inner life” which means an interior life. The interior life, the soul, revolves around truth and goodness. Man is a “rational” being. He is able to use his reason to reflect, ask questions, understand and draw conclusions. Through his reason he exercises his free will in the options he makes. Through this inner world he establishes contact with the exterior world. Physical contact is the exterior experience in a relationship of love. The interior world is another realm of love but it is through both that human beings love.

Mans capacity to love depends on his willingness to consciously seek a good together with the other and to subordinate himself to that good. Love is the reason for God’s commandments. Sex is a good, after all, God created it. God connected it with human life. He connected it with marriage and family. Why did God do this? It must be for the true good of every human being. Here there are many responses, the good of our body, the good of our hearts, the good of human life, the good of a women’s dignity, etc.

Even the day after your wedding, you will need to practice chastity and purity in a relationship just like you will need to practice patience with your spouse. Every effort made now, stopping a wandering eye, avoiding a passionate kiss, shutting the door on the imagination and avoiding all sensual touch are ways of loving. They involve seeing the truth and good for myself and the other, they involve my reason, my will and my heart, they are acts of love. If what I want to do is love my boyfriend or girlfriend, the question is, why wouldn't I do this for him or her??? I am using my freedom to love her by practicing this virtue, this self-mastery, this IS LOVE.

If you or your future spouse has to make extended business trips one day, you will have to learn to wait. If you are sick for an extended time, he will have to learn to wait. However, should it be because "there is no other choice" in the matter or because I opt with my freedom to accept and embrace this situation out of love? The love and respect you forge through virtue now will be a huge asset, a blessing and gift for your marriage. It is a gift of real love!

But how can we make sure we live this chaste relationship?

Suggestion: Set clear parameters! Talk about it and sit down together and list them.

Examples: We will not be alone in places where we could fall into temptation, limit the alcohol intake, dress modestly, avoid sensual contact, etc.