

EXCEL

ISSUE: Spring 2007

TAG: Spring07.creel-temptation.doc

BY: Colin Creel

HED: **Wait watchers**

SUB: *personal purity requires a proactive game plan*

BIO: Colin Creel is Dean of Junior Boys at Wesleyan School (Norcross, Ga). He is author of *Perspectives: A Spiritual Life Guide for Twentysomethings* (Relevant Books). See www.colincreel.com for more on Colin.

PULLQUOTE:

Don't talk to strangers. Don't date guys with vans. Don't play with fire. Don't have sex before marriage. If you're like most high-schoolers, you've heard it all before. After a while, the warnings from parents or pastors start to resemble white noise: always there, but easily ignored.

These repetitive reminders will probably only get louder and more frequent as your departure date for college gets closer. So how will you sort through all the incoming data and formulate your own standards for relating to the opposite sex in college?

KNOW what you believe and why

Why do you make the decisions you make? Are you governed by your peers, or by something more enduring than their opinions?

Think. Question. Delve into Scripture. It is vital to have a personal set of standards that doesn't change based upon the people around you. If you don't have concrete reasons for why you choose not to have premarital sex, it's almost inevitable that you will give in to temptation during college. "It's really important to decide what you're going to do before you go off to school. If you're not sure about your boundaries you don't want to cross, then you'll likely (make poor choices)," offers Alex, a freshman girl at Baylor University.

As simple as it may sound, in order to be a person of conviction—and not merely of preference—you must be able to explain to others and to yourself what your convictions are. Are you really sure about your beliefs, or are they just what you've always been told? If you figure out what you believe, and the reasons why you believe it, then you'll have something to hold onto when you find yourself in tricky situations.

DECIDE on your boundaries

As you enter your late teens and early college years, you will encounter more opportunities for sex than ever before. So how will you set standards for yourself that are not dictated by your friends or by your parents, but by you, as you examine your conscience before the Holy Spirit?

The classic question that people ask in this situation is “How far is too far?” However, maybe a better question would be, “How much of myself do I want to save for my future husband/wife?” Also, as you make this decision, consider how you would want a guy or girl to treat your future spouse in a dating relationship.

Remember that you can’t divorce your physical body from the rest of you. When relationships begin to get physical, they quickly deepen and are much more painful to end. Being physical also usually alters your view of the relationship, leaving you unable to look at it objectively.

In my job at a high school, I witness plenty of dating couples. Unfortunately, it can be painfully apparent which students are having sex by the depth of the drama involved in the relationship. So if you really want to get the most out of your college experience—the friends, the fun and even the classes—consider setting a standard to keep relationships with the opposite sex simple, and not overly-serious or physical.

Some good verses to consider as you decide on your boundaries are Song of Solomon 2:7 and Rom. 13:14.

UNDERSTAND the extent of the consequences

You may have heard the example that sex is like fire. It’s incredible when properly confined within marriage, just like fire within a fireplace or a fireworks display. But also like fire, sex can create devastating damage when it gets out of its intended limits.

You’re probably not thinking much about marriage at this point in your life, but habits formed before marriage will affect your sex life even after marriage. Bryan didn’t plan to have sex before marriage, but he did. He was in love, in a long-term relationship, they both were Christians, both believed pre-marital sex was wrong, both tried not to give in to their desires—and both succumbed. Fortunately, Bryan and his girlfriend ended up getting married, they hadn’t contracted any sexually transmitted diseases, and now they have two great kids and a wonderful marriage. However, he and his wife are still filled with regret when they reflect back on their dating life.

Believe it or not, Bryan says that the consequences of pre-marital sex still affect him on a daily basis. He shares, “It’s so natural to treat my wife as (merely) an object of physical pleasure. . . . The fact that (we) just got married instead of seeing victory over our self-control issues with sex robbed us of the power we claim in Christ to change and to be transformed.”

CLAIM the power of Christ to overcome temptation

As a result of giving into the temptation of premarital sex, early in his marriage Bryan struggled with viewing his faith through a cynical lens, not truly believing he would ever achieve victory over temptation this side of eternity. Over time, the cynical scales fell off as he racked up numerous little victories of overcoming his flesh, and this helped him grow closer to Christ. He adds that, “If you are (young) and having sex, you have to know that God can give you victory to get some self-control and stay pure.”

God wants you to succeed in the battle against sexual temptation, and he offers you all that you need for the fight. Some great verses to read are 1 Cor. 10:13 and Matt. 4:1-11. Check out Eph. 6 for the classic list of spiritual combat gear, and consider how you can start arming up now for the battles that will come in college.

FIND a group of believers who will hold you accountable

Unfortunately for us lazy bums, claiming the power of Christ over sexual temptation isn't as easy as saying some magic words. Instead, claiming His power is a process. Healthy boundaries are a great start, but you need others to keep you accountable to your standards.

Sin thrives in the dark, in isolation, and God did not design you to wrestle with your struggles alone. We all have dark recesses in our souls that we hope no one ever sees, but if left unchecked, our sin will eventually surface. Don't trust yourself to be able to maintain your sexual purity without accountability. Tommy, a freshman at Wake Forest University, suggests, "Make limits for yourself and let your friends know what those limits are so they can hold you accountable."

Mark, a freshman at the University of Georgia, offers "the best way to fight sexual temptation is to hide the Word of God in your heart so that He will sustain you in the midst of trial. However, it is just as important to have a strong accountability partner or group of friends who will challenge you to live up to your spiritual potential, choosing sound eternal commitment over worldly compromise."

SIDEBAR:

Practical suggestions:

- (bullet) Don't go inside your date's apartment or dorm room when you know that no one else is there to keep you accountable. Stay in common areas.
- (bullet) Plan fun dates.
- (bullet) Return home by midnight ... nothing good happens after midnight.
- (bullet) Pray continually.
- (bullet) Stay plugged into a community where others can keep you accountable.
- (bullet) Make sure you are equally yoked. Does your love interest share the same belief system? If not, run.