

True Love Waits

True Loves Waits . . . For What?
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So what exactly are we encouraging teens to wait for? Real love, right? How will they know if it's 'real' love? What kind of person, what kind of relationship is worth the wait? There are many voices out there expressing views on love and relationships. Who do teens listen to? Who's telling the truth about love?

Do you hear what they hear?
Listen to this . . .

- ♪ "I want to push you around. And I will, I will. I want to push you down. And I will, I will. I want to take you for granted . . ."
(From the song "Push" by Matchbox 20)
- ♪ "You say you don't, when I know that you want it." (Lyrics from R & B artist, Usher)
- ♪ "I'm a b—tch, I'm a lover, I'm a child, I'm a mother . . ."
(Lyrics from Paula Cole)
- ♪ "It's a sad, sad world when a girl will break a boy just because she can." (From the song "Criminal" by Fiona Apple)

Yeah, but teens don't believe everything they hear, right?
Consider this . . .

- ♦ Teens in Rhode Island were asked to respond to questions regarding circumstances under which a man "has the right to have sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent." Eighty percent said he had the right to force sex if the couple were married, 70 percent said he had the right to force sex if they were planning to marry, 30 percent said force was justified if . . . he knew she'd had sex with other men, if he was so sexually stimulated that he couldn't control himself, or, if the woman was drunk. (Source : *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*, by Mary Pipher, Ph.D.)

Or this . . .

- ♦ In 1993, 4,200 girls in grades 2-12, from public, private, and parochial schools around the country voluntarily responded to a *Seventeen* magazine survey cosponsored by Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. The survey asked questions about unwanted behaviors experienced at school. Eighty-nine percent of these girls report receiving unwanted sexual comments or gestures; 83 percent report unwanted sexual touching, pinching, or grabbing; 28 percent report receiving unwanted sexual notes or pictures; 39 percent said these behaviors were happening daily at their schools.

Obviously, some teens are listening to and imitating distorted media and cultural messages about sex, love, and relationships. And some teens are engaging in inappropriate, unhealthy, or harmful behaviors and are calling it 'love.'

What can we do? Arm teens with the truth! Teach them what a healthy relationship is and is not. Get specific. Describe and model

what 'true love' is and what kind of relationship is worth waiting for.

Want a good place to start? Check out 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (CEV). St. Paul specifically describes *real love* as "kind, patient, rejoices in the truth, is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting." *Real love is not* "jealous, boastful, proud, rude, selfish, quick-tempered, doesn't keep a record of wrongs and never fails." Paul names concrete behaviors teens can look for and put into practice in relationships.

Youth Care professionals here at Boys Town have taken this one step further. We created a practical curriculum that teaches teens . . .

- 1) how to identify and avoid unhealthy and harmful relationships, and
- 2) how to create and maintain healthy, loving relationships.

Unmasking Sexual Con Games was originally created for and piloted with at-risk youth. We soon discovered this curriculum appeals to many others. Now it's used to help middle school, high school, and university students around the country learn more about relationships. ☺