

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."¹ Did you catch that? It says when you have a spouse you are no longer two but one – and as one you're together through all the good times and the bad.

Marriage isn't Perfect.

If you want a relationship that is secure, save sex for marriage. Sex is best in marriage because it's the result of a commitment between two people before sex. They promise to have each other's backs no matter what happens in life. Its "us against the world." Marriage is where "you and me" becomes "us."

Sadly, there is no way to guarantee a relationship will last a lifetime, even in marriage, although, marriages, on average, far outlast all other relationships with sexual benefits.⁴ In fact, breakups are *more* likely if you start your relationship with sex. Marriage is not easy, but if both of you are *committed*, then you can make it even through the hard times.

Make a Plan

Define the relationship. If you *live* with your boyfriend, talk to him and *define* the relationship; whether you both plan to move forward and get married, or whether it's better to break up if you don't see marriage in your future.

Wait until marriage to have sex. Let him know you are going to *wait* to get married before having sex so that you can have a deep bond with your husband. But be warned, this may not go well. If he only will stay with you if you give him sex, then you know this is not that deep relationship you *want*.

If you decide to get married, set a date. This helps you to keep to your *commitment* of not having any more sex until marriage because you will now have the end in sight!

Do not be alone together. Being *alone* could lead to temptation. See if you have a family member or girlfriend you can live with in the meantime. Make an effort to spend time together playing video games or board games. Try hanging out in groups because being alone could lead to temptation. This takes a real commitment and will strengthen your relationship and marriage. You will have to be the one to set sexual boundaries or stop foreplay by deciding ahead of time that you will. You are worth the wait and the work of waiting.

The Good News

We have learned a lot about how you can damage future relationships by having multiple sex partners, and how your future marriage may have struggles because of your past, but there is good news for you. We've ALL messed up. We're all covered in mistakes that hurt us, that make life harder, and most importantly that separates us from God who loves us. He loves YOU so much that He sent His son, Jesus to take the punishment for your mistakes. We can easily accept this gift of becoming clean by believing that Jesus took care of our messes. Then He gives us strength to turn from our old ways and do our best to live His way. The price has already been paid, and the gift of forgiveness is yours to take. If you want to know more, then ask someone who you know is a Christian, and they'll walk you through accepting the gift of grace.

If you have already given pieces of yourself away, there's still hope. You can trust God to heal you and make you whole again. You are valuable, and God who made the mountains, oceans, and galaxies loves YOU. Value yourself by committing to living the healthiest, most satisfying lifestyle.

Resources include:

1. Genesis 2:24, Bible.
2. Rhoades, G.K., PhD. & Stanley, S.M., PhD. Before I Do. The National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia. 2014. Found at <http://before-i-do.org/>, accessed 1/29/2019.
3. Bell, R. Sex God. 2012. Found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1nLggZP00Q&t=37s>, accessed 1/29/2019.
4. Waite, L.J. The Negative Effects of Cohabitation. The Communitarian Network. Vol. 10, Issue 1. Winter. 2000. Washington, DC. Found at https://www2.gwu.edu/~ccps/rcq/rcq_negativeeffects_waite.html, accessed 1/29/2019.