

## CHAPTER 37

# The Challenge of Chastity

Let's begin by answering some of the questions that millions of teenagers ask. What is chastity? What is modesty and purity? How do you practice chastity? What are some of the consequences if you don't? How far do you go? What if you've already gone too far?


### What is chastity?

Chastity, very simply, is sexual self-control.

Chastity is possible, livable and good. Believe it or not, many people today are choosing chastity. Why? Because they want to experience true love. Premarital sex oftentimes leads to lack of deep commitment and mutual responsibility in relationship, resulting in emotional trauma and suffering. Don't you think that there's enough pain in the world without practicing something that invites new kinds of pain? So we need to understand why and how to say no to premarital sex and how to say yes to true responsible love. Chastity is the way of true love.

"Hey, all you guys out there! I don't know about you but I want a girl who respects my values and me. I don't want a girl who is going to manipulate me and tease me, who will try to tempt away my self-control. I want a girl who's going to wait for me until I'm married because I'm going to wait for her, too. I think to have had it before marriage would tend to take away from the completeness and the total uniqueness of our total belonging





to each other. I want to learn how to make love with the person I will spend my whole life loving. And to do that before marriage would tarnish the complete trust, the complete believing in each other that we should have in a marriage. I know that chastity may not be the easiest virtue for us guys today but it's one that promises lifelong rewards. I value my virginity. Don't you wish everyone did?"

— Andrei, age 17

### *Sex is not the center of the universe*

You have been hearing from magazines, books, radio, newspapers, TV, films and music that sex is the center of the universe—that sex is the most important thing that's ever going to happen to you in your entire life!

But don't you think it is very humiliating to think that sex and love are the same? Aren't we putting ourselves on the same level with animals? Would you like the person whom you love to love you only for your sexy appearance? In this case if (or when) in several years you lose your attractive appearance, it will mean that you will lose love as well, wouldn't it?

We all need direction and guidance in life to help us to understand where we are going and how to get there. But these days it seems we're bombarded with many conflicting messages about love, life and sex. Our inner voice (some call it the conscience, or God) tells us one thing but the world around us seems to tell us differently. The world says, "Sex is for fun. Enjoy yourself. If it feels good, do it!" But our conscience says, "Sex is an expression of your commitment of love and life. Don't settle for less." Which are you going to follow—your conscience or the world?

### *What is sexual maturity?*

How can we be mature? How can we be a whole person? Knowing how love, marriage and sex fit together in the spectrum of life is necessary to our sexual maturity.

Many teenagers are not sexually active. It is possible in today's world to wait until marriage. It may not be the easiest choice but it is definitely the healthiest—and the most mature. Learning to practice respect and self-control are part of developing one's maturity.

*Oksana:* Come on, Kostya. I thought you were a real man.

*Kostya:* I'm man enough to respect you.

*Oksana:* Don't you find me attractive?

*Kostya:* No, that's not it at all. You're gorgeous. You drive me crazy!

*Oksana:* Then, what's the matter? Aren't you mature enough to handle it?

*Kostya:* Hey, I'm mature enough to make the right decision.



*Oksana:* I didn't know you were so straight!

*Kostya:* Oh, come on Oksana, don't make it so difficult. I have feelings. I have desires. But I have enough problems in my life and don't need the ones that sex brings. So, let's go to Penguin's and get an ice cream to cool you off.

Please understand what we are saying here. There is nothing bad about sex itself. It is a beautiful gift given to two people who have committed themselves to each other in love. Through this relationship they will bring children into the world. These children will help to solidify the love between parents even more. Children represent the incarnation of the love of their parents.

You may be wondering why we have sex drives. Externally they serve the purpose of motivating us to carry on the human race. They are necessary to our very survival! However, outside of a committed relationship in marriage our sex drives provide us with an opportunity to exercise self-control. Just because we're tempted doesn't mean we have to give in to it. Some people think that sex is a need like eating or breathing, but no one ever died from lack of sex. There are many people who practiced celibacy in their life, regarding it as an important component of their spiritual development. Through self-control we gain the ability to channel our sex drives in a healthy direction so that they can fulfill their internal purpose, which is to enable us to experience love and intimacy more deeply with our marriage partner.

### *How do we protect this beautiful gift of chastity?*

Sooner or later, there comes a time when we will face sexual temptation. How do we develop the internal strength to overcome such temptation? We do this by developing a pure mind, clean speech, modest dress and virtuous action.

How do we develop a pure mind? We have to stay away from the mind's "junk food". The mind is an amazing gift. It has the ability to take in information and store it so you can use it later. However, the contents of the mind are not easily erased. What goes in stays. If you fill your mind with images of sexual passion, disobedience, rebellion and violence, how can you ever develop good character traits like being loving, considerate and faithful? What goes in eventually comes out.

Two thousand years ago Jesus said that we could judge a tree by its fruit. The mouth speaks whatever fills the mind. A good man produces good from his storehouse of goodness and an evil man produces evil from his storehouse of evil. Telling a dirty joke reveals the cheapness with which we regard our sexuality. Dressing immodestly does the same, as well as stimulating lustful desires in others.

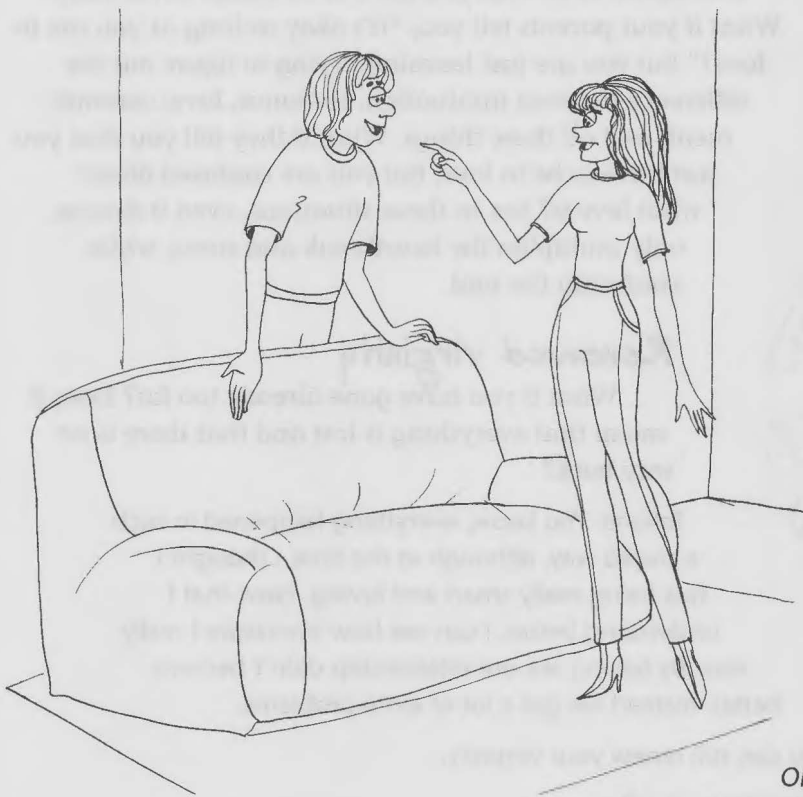
In today's world there are many people who do not hold themselves—or others—in such high regard. Some wonder whether there is anything worth living for, whether there is anything of real value. Even life. Even love.

How do we know what is valuable in life? Whom do we look to and to whom do we go to find our value?

For a religious person the answer to this question is that we are created by God in His image and likeness. That is what determines our value, gives us human dignity. And He gave us parents to teach us His values.

If we are not religious, then our values and way of life should be determined by our conscience. In the majority of complicated situations, especially from the point of view of morality, conscience will tell us what to do — as long as we don't try to suppress its voice. And if it is still difficult to make the right decision (and it happens quite often, especially when we are young and don't have too much life experience of our own), then perhaps the wisest thing to do would be to refer to the experience of older people whom we respect, whom we look up to. For some of you that will be your parents, for others — a teacher, or perhaps a public or historical figure. If we look at the world around us, searching for people who found lasting happiness in their lives, most likely we will find that all these people shared some common values: love, unselfishness, living for the sake of others. One of their main life principles probably would be "treat others the way that you want to be treated".

All this sounds good, but what are you going to do on a Saturday night when the temptations come?



*Vladimir:* But Olga, we love each other. Isn't it natural to show it? Won't it bring us closer?

*Olga:* If we can't get closer by knowing each other's hearts and minds, we won't do it through sex. Besides, God says it's wrong, and I'm certainly not going to argue with Him.

*Vladimir:* Don't give me that stuff. You know you want to. I'm not going to hurt you.

*Olga:* Sex isn't a game, Vlad. We don't even know the hurts that are involved. And stop playing with my emotions!

*Vladimir:* Don't you care about me?

*Olga:* I care enough to say no and to forget that you asked the question.

*Vladimir:* But everyone's doing it.

*Olga:* Then you won't have any trouble finding someone else.

In working with teens who have been sexually active, psychologists discovered that they are not really having fun. Rather they are dealing with many complicated and confused feelings: guilt, shame, worry, many kinds of hurts. That's how they themselves tell it:

*A girl:* "When you're dating someone who doesn't have any limits, you're always wondering, 'how far will he go'? How much does he love me? Do I really love him? What if I get pregnant? Or an STD? You spend so much of your time worrying about these things."

*A guy:* "When I'm on a date and know that most likely we will end up in bed together, I find myself thinking of what to do until then? How can we plan our date so that it's going to happen 'naturally'? It's all so calculating."

So, it isn't all that much fun. But why then do so many teens do it? How does it happen?

“You know, there are many ways. For example, there’s a guy and he’s unsure of himself. So, he’s trying to prove his masculinity over and over again. It’s wrong for a guy to manipulate a girl to reassure himself of his masculinity. On the other hand, a threat to a guy’s masculinity can be quite a big blow. With the liberation movement, there are some pretty aggressive girls nowadays. I guess, one of the toughest challenges for a guy is the issue of his manliness.”

— Timur, age 19

## But what if it is love?

Many teens ask, “What if you’re really in love with a person, you’re close and committed and you’re almost married to them?” Do you know that 50% of engagements are broken?

How much in love do you have to be before sex is okay? What if your parents tell you, “It’s okay as long as you are in love?” But you are just learning, trying to figure out the difference between infatuation, romance, love, commitment, and all these things. What if they tell you that you just have to be in love, but you are confused about what love is? Sex in those situations, even if sincere, only multiplies the heartbreak and stress, while confusing the soul.

## Renewed virginity

What if you have gone already too far? Does it mean that everything is lost and that there is no way back?

*Tatiana:* You know, everything happened in such a stupid way, although at the time I thought I was being really smart and loving. Now that I understand better, I can see how immature I really was. By having sex our relationship didn’t become better. Instead we got a lot of extra problems.

*Natasha:* But you can still renew your virginity.

*Tatiana:* What does that mean?

*Natasha:* It means that you decide to stop having sex until you are married. Do you think you can stop?

*Tatiana:* I think so. But everything became so complicated this past month.

*Natasha:* When I don’t know what to do or how to act, it helps me to speak to God. Then the answer comes as if by itself, and I feel peace and harmony in my heart.

*Tatiana:* But, you know, the time I went with you to church, I didn’t feel anything special. Actually I felt myself even lonelier there.

*Natasha:* Because you lived all your life without God, it’s difficult for you to feel Him. Also, all religions consider sex before marriage to be a sin, and this sin separates you from God. It kind of blocks out the reception, fogs up the line.



*Tatiana:* Maybe you're right. In any case, I wouldn't mind finding in my life that source of love and hope that you speak about so much. Maybe it would help me in making difficult decisions.

*Natasha:* God is always ready to help us.

*Tatiana:* Seriously, it does sound good. To tell you the truth, I don't feel good doing it. But I'll never be able to explain this to Alexei — he expects it now.

*Natasha:* Well, just tell him what you are learning about love and sexuality, that you want to change your ways so you can both grow up and be sure that your relationship is really love— not lust.

*Tatiana:* What if he breaks up with me?

*Natasha:* Then, what have you lost? I mean, is he in love with you or sex? Are you really in love with each other? Who knows? Maybe he's feeling guilty, too, and he just needs you to say something to him so you can both grow up?

*Tatiana:* You know, you're right. It's like a trap and I want to be free. I do want to renew my virginity.

It's not true that teenagers have to suffer because of the sexually cheapened culture that we live in today. You can be part of the chastity generation. You can find the wisdom and courage you need to put more real love in your life— now and in the years to come.

## For Your Journal



- Why can we say that chastity brings freedom? What kind of freedom is it?
- What are some of the ways to keep chastity?
- How can premarital sex get in the way of learning about true love?
- How can we develop a pure mind? Clean speech? Virtuous action?

# Spring Fragrance

## A Korean folk tale

Lee Doryung, the young son of a popular city governor, was out walking one day with his friend and servant. Entering a part of the town he had not seen before, he suddenly caught sight of a young lady of great beauty on a swing with her mother.

"Who is that angel?" he asked.

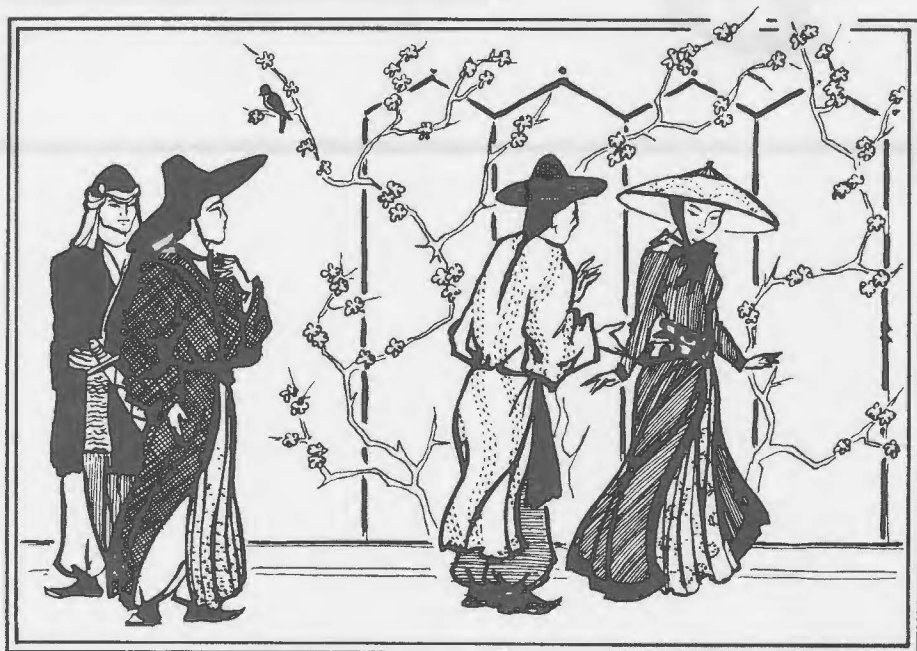
"It is Choon Hyang," answered his servant. "Daughter of the retired courtesan, Plum Blossom." Entranced by her beauty, Lee told his servant to invite the young lady to come to talk to him. The servant hurried off, but soon returned with an enigmatic reply: "Does the flower come to the butterfly, or the butterfly to the flower?"

At home that night, Lee could hardly eat, for his mind was full of thoughts of Choon Hyang. When his parents had gone to bed, he crept out of the house and made haste to Choon Hyang's house.

There he found Choon Hyang waiting for him. The two were in love at first sight. But marriage seemed impossible, for Choon Hyang was from a lower class, while Lee was from a noble background. He soon would have to go to the capital, Seoul, for the civil service examinations. But she loved him too, and they begged Choon Hyang's mother to let them marry. Finally, she agreed that they could marry in secret, as long as Lee promised in writing not to abandon her daughter. He agreed eagerly.

After a short time of marital bliss, the time came for Lee to leave town and go to Seoul to take the examinations essential to his progress. With many tears and kisses, he parted from his young bride, promising to return as a gentleman and take her away.

However, events took a different turn. While Lee was away on his studies, Lee's parents were also summoned to Seoul. They were replaced by an oppressive governor who imposed heavy taxes on the people. The



governor began to take an interest in the lovely Choon Hyang, whom he often commanded to come to his palace to dance. Time passed and the governor proposed to Choon Hyang.

"I am promised to another," she said.

"Who, Lee Doryung?" sneered the governor. "When will you face reality? He won't ever come back to a peasant like you! He probably has a real wife and children in Seoul already. But I could look after you. ... " Time and again this scene was acted out, until at last the frustrated governor had Choon Hyang thrown into jail. There she had long hours to ponder. Years went by, and still there was no sign of Lee. What had happened to him? Had he found a more attractive wife in Seoul? She could not believe it, and waited in hope.

After graduating from his examinations, Lee had been summoned by the king to perform a special task. He was to travel throughout the country, disguised as a beggar, in order to observe whether the country was being governed justly. He traveled with a company of soldiers, also disguised as beggars. It was an important commission, and it took time. At last, he came close to his own hometown.

"How are the times?" he asked of the people.

"Never worse!" they said in chorus. "Our governor is a cruel man. He takes away our food, our land, and even our daughters!"

"Daughters!" exclaimed Lee. "And do you have any news of Choon Hyang?"

"Yes, poor thing," they replied. "First of all she was deflowered and abandoned by the former governor's son. And then, as if one pig wasn't enough, now she has been imprisoned by the new governor for resisting his approaches!"

Lee hurried to Choon Hyang's mother's house. With some difficulty, he convinced her that he was indeed her son-in-law, but to preserve his disguise, he told her that he had failed his examinations and been reduced to begging. Would Choon Hyang want to see him in those circumstances?

"No, you must go now!" said her mother "She is sick in prison and may not have long to live. And she is still waiting for you, watching out of her cell window. Let her see you before she dies!"

Still in disguise, Lee went to the prison, hoping he was not too late. He could see a thin and pale Choon Hyang watching from a basement cell. Making his way to the window, he told her that he had suffered disgrace and returned as a beggar. Could she forgive him? Yes, she could. To see him before she died was enough. Yet there was a more urgent matter.

"Tomorrow the governor intends once more to force me to marry him," she said. "He promises medicine and food if I agree. And he is going to hold a party in celebration!"

Lee had heard enough. Hurrying away from the prison, he met with his men and gave them precise instructions for the following day. When the banquet time arrived, he found his way into the governor's palace and into the banqueting hall. Seeing a beggar in their company, the governor ordered him thrown out. But with the help of his men, Lee soon found his way back into the banquet hall.



"Your Excellency," he said, "I have a poem of congratulations for you." He began to read. It was no ordinary poem, but rather an indictment of all the wrongdoing of the governor and his regime.

"Enough!" said the governor. "Seize this man and throw him into prison!" At this, Lee stood to his full height, and taking off his disguise, showed his royal seal of authority to the governor, who was quickly arrested.

Now dressed in his royal robes of authority, Lee sent for Choon Hyang from the jail. She, of course, could not recognize in this powerful official her beggar husband who had recently returned.

"Choon Hyang," he said, "you have been grievously mistreated by this wretched governor. I do not believe his charges. I will release you from prison immediately ... if you become my wife."

Choon Hyang burst into tears. "What a miserable people we are," she sobbed, "that every one of our king's servants is as corrupt and lustful as the other! I would rather die in prison!"

Moved to tears himself, Lee spoke again: "Look, my love, it is I, Lee Doryung. I have come back to you as promised." With tears of recognition the two lovers were united.

With the fall of the evil governor peace returned to the town and Lee took his wife to Seoul to meet the king. When he heard the remarkable tale of her perseverance and fidelity, the king exclaimed, "Not even our noblewomen can match this!" In recognition the king made Choon Hyang a duchess.