

Pre-marital sex

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“When chaste people need body or mind to resort to action or thought, they find steel in their muscles or knowledge in their intelligence.” The “steel” and “knowledge” that French author Honore de Balzac refers to in his opinion of the nature of chaste persons can be interpreted as referring to many different qualities of such a person. The “steel”, referring to the unbreakable moral strength of a chaste person and the “knowledge”, the wisdom to use such moral strength to make the right decisions in life is the interpretation that many would come to understand when closely examining this quote. However, in today’s world, where such steel and knowledge are extremely rare and where finding a chaste person is nearly impossible, the reasoning behind why social injustices and world problems exist becomes quite clear. One particular social problem that deals with these attributes of moral strength and wisdom and with chastity is pre-marital sex. Pre-marital sex, intercourse that is committed between two persons before entering a commitment of holy marriage, appears quite commonplace in today’s society, where nine out of ten American males and females have admitted to participating in the act (Jayson). However, the problems that can arise from such activity are not limited to merely the physical consequences, such as the spread of sexual transmitted diseases and pregnancy, but can drastically affect other areas of one’s life.

If such consequences are so drastic, then why are desires of lust among unmarried persons so readily and frequently acted upon? The solution to this problem can be attributed to many different answers, ranging from a general ignorance of the risks, to

people merely ignoring the consequences and serving one's personal desires before one's morals. Both answers are valid, simply because both are integrated into human nature. However, there are more specific and recognizable entities that is to blame for the degradation of sexual responsibility by the act of pre-marital sex: society and the government. Although research will show that the number of people participating in pre-marital sex has only increased by a small amount, the age of which people first have pre-marital sex has dropped by nearly four years, from age twenty to sixteen (Finer). By directly connecting the mass media expansion of the last few decades, with the increase of sexually provocative material in magazines, television program and internet websites, one can establish a link between society, whose standards have deteriorated dramatically and the increase in pre-marital sexual activity. The other entity that can take just as much blame is the government, whose ineffective methods of handling the problem of pre-marital sex has led to an increase in STDs and abortion. Although these facts and viewpoints may not impress or change the opinion of some, the problems that can be linked to pre-marital sex and problems that stem directly from the act are serious enough to, at the least, be pondered over. Through the degradation of society and inaction of the government, pre-marital sex is growing as a severe social problem that threatens society through the destruction of the family, morals and spirituality, all essential components to a successful and responsible community.

Pre-marital sex, although seemingly universally acceptable in modern society, has the potential to bring about problems that either unknown or often simply ignored by members of society. The most commonly known of these problems is the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Often times, pre-marital sex will occur between couples

that have not been together for a long period of time and therefore, have not shared many of his/her past partners or relationships that may have been with partners with STDs in order to keep the current relationship going. Ranging from temporary inconveniences to life threatening illnesses, STDs have become increasingly widespread throughout the world during the previous decades, especially with the disease known as AIDS (Warner). The spread of infection is just one problem that pre-marital sex raises in the physical sense for people. Another issue, not necessarily a problem in all cases, is pregnancy. The pregnancy rates for all women in America have risen significantly in the last twenty years, as have the abortion rates (Finer). More concerning, both numbers for females between the ages of fifteen and nineteen have increased dramatically. Pregnancy, specifically, pre-marital and teenage pregnancy, can lead to a plethora of problems, including strain on the parents (or often times, mother) to provide support for the child. Households that cannot provide this support will foster an environment that is not suitable for raising a child and can lead to problems later in the child's life, ranging from receiving a poor or no education and leading to a life of crime or other illegal activities. In more horrific cases, a pre-marital pregnancy may even lead to abortion, the ending of a child's life for the sake of "convenience" of the mother. Such problems that have increased steadily through the fifty years are not coincidences; those problems are direct results and problems that are raised by pre-marital sex. To call pregnancy a problem would be a major mistake, but to deny the problems that can accompany a pregnancy, especially in the case of an unprepared, single teenage female, can bring problems for the mother and child in dramatic fashion.

The physical problems of premarital sex are ones that can be understood and experienced by all, no matter the race, creed or age. However, the moral and spiritual conflict that pre-marital sex presents is one that can be understood by some, but still experienced by all. To call sex immoral would be incorrect. Sex is one of the most beautiful and important functions that human beings perform. Without this act, life cannot be brought into the world and life in the world cannot continue. However, the life that is brought into the world as a result of sexual relations must be fostered and educated to lead a life that will be full and upstanding, so that the life is able to bring about positive change and influence to the world. Therefore, sex between committed, loving couples ensures that this new life will receive those things. The love and support of a sound family unit and the opportunities to receive such education to make the world a more complete, wholesome and loving place. This practical standpoint of ensuring that a child will be able to become successful and not have to overcome abandonment or other hardships because of strains that the single mother or father must overcome as well is complemented with the religious standpoint of morality. From a Catholic perspective, the will of God insists that pre-marital sex not occur because the sole purpose of sexual relations is not for pleasure or recreation, but to bring about new life into the world. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, a collection of Catholic teaching and thinker, states “Fornication is carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. It is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered to the good of spouses and the generation and education of children. Moreover, it is a grave scandal when there is corruption of the young (CCC 2353).” The degradation of both persons involved and the disrespect for God’s creation may not apply to all

people, but the principle behind this teaching can apply to all situations. The way in which people treat sex as a game or pastime is met with disagreement in both the practical and religious sense, both of which bring ideas that support the decision to save the act of intercourse for marriage and for the purpose of creating new life for the world.

This moral problem that can be understood by any person, regardless of the religion, race or culture, connects directly to the moral problem that exists in today's media. As television, the internet and magazines have expanded throughout the twentieth century and continue to reach new audiences in the twenty-first century, the high moral standards of past are virtually gone. Virtues, such as honesty, respect and integrity that were displayed on television shows such as Andy Griffith and Leave it to Beaver have been replaced by a constant barrage of sexual programming, which can be found nearly on any station. Although these shows of the past do not speak to the problems of the modern day and are certainly outdated for this generation, the morals and virtues that those shows displayed will never lose meaning or purpose, only airtime. The virtues of making profits and attracting viewers are now the virtues that are held in high regard, bringing about movies, music and television that merely seek to find these viewers with "shock and awe" material. This may seem like a digression, but this opinion of the media leads directly back to the question at hand, what has caused such an uproar in the rise of pre-marital sex, especially among younger people? The media can not be entirely put to blame, but the impact that media has on American culture is strong enough to put the media up to the challenge of providing programming and material that will not only inspire young people, but not lead the future leaders of the world down a path of degradation and low morality, a path that the nation itself will certainly follow if lead by

such people. The media in its many forms does not shoulder the entire responsibility however. The past and recent actions of the federal government, although attempted, have not had a significant impact to reduce the occurrence of pre-marital sex, an act that has been proven to lead to other major social problems.

"Abstinence Will Not Cure AIDS. Research Will." This ad that was posted throughout New York City during the nineties speaks directly to the debate that has occurred in the government as to what to do about the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (All about Worldview). While one side may argue that only research and development will move towards a cure, such as the poster of this ad, many argue that abstinence and education are the key components to preventing the further spread of STDs and the other problems associated with pre-marital sexual activity. The federal government, although providing hundreds of thousands of dollars towards this education, has obviously failed in its attempts to teach the importance of sexual abstinence, or the very least, sexual discretion (MSNBC). With 95% of all Americans between the ages of 12 and 29 admitting to having pre-marital sex, the education that was to prevent such acts from occurring either: did not have enough impact on the students; taught improperly; or not enforced strongly enough by the government (Warner, Jayson). On the other hand, the percentage of teenage smokers in America has drastically decreased within five years, down to 28.5 percent from 36.4 percent, in just a five year time span (Swanbrow). This has come as a result of not only a sharp increase in the price of cigarettes, but with a barrage in anti-smoking and smoking awareness programs ran from the elementary to high school levels of school. The government's action against this "evil" was effective and was effectively run. So, why have the sexual awareness programs failed so

miserably? The questions may lie in the information above, but another, more reasonable conclusion can be reached.

The solution to this question of effectiveness comes down the apathy of the government towards the problem of pre-marital sexual intercourse. Despite the risks of sexual transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy and abortion, all of which are major social problems, the education that is to provided to students by the government and educators has failed and has been pushed aside as commonality in American society. Looking past the moral aspects of this problem, since many do not follow these standards, the consequences that pre-marital sex can bring about should be reason enough for the government to address. More extensive and informational programs must be installed in every school, even starting at the elementary level. Being too concerned about a child's maturity level to teach elementary schoolchildren these facts is not a concern that will lead to a solution. Research has proven that sexual activity does not wait for a certain age, but begins as early as pre-teen and early teenage years. The most important times in a person's life are the early years of elementary, middle and high school. The moral foundation for that person's life is laid at those points, shaping the decisions that will be made in the future. Such education must provide in order to make these decisions not only moral decisions, but responsible and safe choices.

The blame of what has caused such an acceptance and activity of pre-marital sex in today's society can be attributed to many groups. The influence of society, the inaction of the government and irresponsibility of parents are all answers that focus the attention of the problem away from what really matters in social problems such as this – a solution to the problem. Further education and media responsibility are two crucial steps

that must be taken to even give the chance of reducing the abortion rates and impoverished families with children that cannot provide the proper support to raise the child. Once these are established, the moral integrity and wisdom gained by young people can be used together to make responsible decisions. That “steel” and “knowledge” spoken of before are not easy attributes to achieve and are even harder to maintain, but with the proper tools provided and with the moral strength, a safer, more virtuous and responsible America will be created. Society must address these problems from moral perspectives, because these problems are ones of immorality. The education of the respect of life and responsibility to carry out the common good of the society must be ingrained into American culture, just as the thinking of society has been ingrained with the acceptance of pre-marital sex and the acceptance of other moral problems as commonplace. Through the proper education and reintroduction of strong, traditional morals and values, society as a whole will make a shift back into what matters the most – the concern for and action for the betterment of future generations.