

Crimson & White Connection

A ministry of prayer and encouragement to "High School, College, & Singles" (& others, too)
Values & Character + Spiritual Life + Relationships + Fun stuff

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 Rich or Marie Dymmel
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Crimson & White? What's this?

... This letter is part of a ministry primarily to students and singles. It started with college students. Now about 60% of the mailing list are college students, 20% middle and high school, and 10% are age 22 to 30, and we'll just leave ages unsaid for the last 10% since, well, they're old.. Articles are on character, values, spiritual life, relationships and more ... and some fun.

The theology position is "conservative," i.e. Jesus is God's Son, eternal, part of the single triune God, born of a virgin, sinless, crucified and risen, and is the *only* way to eternal life. We are free to choose Him. He has told us to be holy and that includes behaviors such as: sex outside of marriage is wrong.

This letter and post cards are sent about twice a month. We're trying to say that you are important enough for us to put this in your mailbox. We care about you and want to encourage your character growth and your spiritual walk.

A second part of the ministry is prayer. We pray for each person on our mailing list as the mail is prepared. When you get mail from us, you know someone prayed for you.

A college student reader chose the name **Crimson and White Connection** based on Isaiah 1:18 in the Bible "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." The cleansing of our nature and our sins is a universal need. If you base your trust for entrance into Heaven in Jesus, God's Son, and His death and resurrection on your behalf, then your crimson stains are made white as wool. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other way. If you admit that you can not reach God's standard, are repentant and sorry for your short fall (sin) and have asked Him to forgive you, then He has forgiven you. If you are truly repentant, then there will be evidence of that in your actions, your life. - - If the "religion police" were to arrest you, would you be turned loose for "lack of evidence"? Or would the evidence of your actions convict you of being a Christian?

If you have chosen to accept Jesus as Lord of your life, either the first time or again, we would like to know so that we can pray for you and encourage you. Write or call us.

You WILL BE and ARE a slave! But you can CHOOSE your master! CHOOSE God today.

John 3:16 is true. Accept no substitute!

June 8, 2005

The Future

By Dr. Richard R. Dymmel, Ed.D., (c) 2005

"If you should wake up and the future isn't clear... I will still be there." - - Maybe it's graduation and you don't have a job or don't know how you're going to pay for school. Or maybe you lost your job and there are bills to pay. Maybe a friend has left you. Maybe you're waiting for the lab test results.

We recently were on a trip and ahead lies a mountain. There is no apparent road that zigzags to climb the mountain. As we round the turn in the highway, the entrance to a tunnel comes into view. But what lies on the other end of the tunnel? With experience, we know the road doesn't just go into a cave and end. But thinking it's a tunnel, we've been surprised by tunnels before. It can be sunny on this side of the mountain and pouring rain on the other side. In Colorado, we approached the Eisenhower Tunnel and the ground was dry, the sun shining. A mile later, we emerged into a white winter wonderland with snow 3 to 5 feet deep everywhere. And the warm, sunshine we had going into the tunnel, now became a blinding white needing sunglasses.



Life's road often winds through gentle curves.

Then looming in front of you is a mountain. Are you going to have to climb over? - When I was in high school a bunch of us guys went camping and canoeing. (Yes we had cars, it wasn't THAT long ago!) At some parts of the river we lashed the canoes together and let the current drift us along. Sometimes the river was a little "bumpy" and we needed to paddle and guide the canoes. There was one part where the river became a lake and we had to paddle or we would have never got across. At the other end of the lake was a dam. We had to portage, take the canoes and all our stuff and carry it around the dam and down to where the river began again. As we crossed to the other side of the river where there was an area that looked good to stop for lunch, the gates in the dam opened and we suddenly had, not a gentle stream, but a rushing torrent to fight against. We almost were pushed downstream past that good lunch spot, but we made it. We pulled the canoes way up on the bank and tied them securely. - Sometimes life can just "carry you along. Sometimes you have to paddle. Sometimes you have to carry the load. And sometimes you have to paddle like crazy just to keep from getting swept downstream.

As you round the bend, if there is a mountain in the way, instead of telling God how big your mountain is, tell the mountain how big your God is.

Remember Jeremiah 29:11-14 - God has a good plan all mapped out for you. And if you ever feel lost, He said that when you earnestly seek Him, you will find Him.

So who's plan do you trust? - Have you ever played the "trust game" by falling and have someone catch you? In the Fall of the year, Charlie Brown has Lucy hold the football and he runs to kick it, she pulls it away, and he kicks the air, falling on his back. Lucy can't be trusted. - Trusting an invisible God usually comes after you have learned that there is someone you *can* trust. Trusting someone might be scary. Trusting an invisible God can be scary, too, till you learn to trust Him. You'll even begin to *see* Him, all around you. He never fails. Trust me, I know, I've experienced Him and seen His work. - And if you trust Him with your eternity, are you trusting Him with your tomorrow and with your today?

In Christ, Rich

Do you have a relationship with God where you know He has accepted you just as you are? A relationship like with a loving father? If not, call me at 336-674-7564. Or call 1-888-NEED-HIM. - With God, you have never gone too far to return. -



From the mailbox (Letters may be slightly edited to remove some personal content and identifying stuff. We won't blab your name or email address.) Your letters and notes encourage us, too. Rich

Subject: an update...finally! [Only slightly edited.]

Date: 5/23/2005

From: jnall@tulane.edu

Greetings everyone!

I'm sure many of you have thought that I've fallen off the edge of the earth or something since you haven't heard from me in so long. But never fear, I'm still alive and kickin', just getting too lazy to make time to sit down and email. So much has been going on lately, I don't know where to start, but I'll try to update you on some of the major events...

As for my friend's dad who was diagnosed last December with Hodgkin's disease, after 6 months of chemotherapy, he is much stronger and doing much better! Praise God! Recently he received a report from the doctor that there is no more signs of the cancer in the blood tests, ... thank you to everyone for praying! Please continue to lift him and his family up in prayer for continued healing, emotional and financial stability, ...

It's getting to be winter time again, and as most around here will tell you, they put up with the summers just so that they can enjoy the wonderfully mild winters. And I must say it has been very nice weather recently. It gets pretty cool (50s maybe) at night (I need to put my blanket back on my bed) but it warms up to the 70s or 80s and sometimes 90s during mid-day. I'm extremely relieved to finally have a break in the constant heat of summer! It's also sugar cane harvesting time, so we're beginning to see the "black snow" (the ash from the burning of the sugar cane fields) start to fall. Citrus fruits and avocados are in season now too, so there's lots to be had for cheap around here. Also the past few months I've had my due fill of plums and nectarines ... YUM!! One of the things I will definitely miss about this place is all the different fresh fruits year round.

Speaking of missing this place, for those of you who have lost track of time, I've been here in South Africa for almost 2 years now. My time is supposed to finish in the middle of September and I had been planning on staying till December to finish the school year, but plans have changed (and will probably still change a thousand times before now and then) and I plan to stay until the end of the third school term which means I will be finishing sometime early or mid October. Which means that I've got less than 5 months left here which is (like any transitional period) exciting and scary and sad and every other emotion all combined, so I try not to think about it too much! :-)) I don't know yet what I will do post-Peace Corps. Trying to find a job seems to be the natural answer to the question, but what job and where, I haven't a clue. I'm not so worried because I know God is taking care of everything and so I'm just trying to keep my focus on Him so I don't miss any opportunities he puts in my path. But, if any of you hear of any jobs that you think might suit me, please let me know!

Well, I can think of a thousand other things to write about, but I would probably go on for pages and pages and you would all get bored of reading, so I'll stop here for now. I hope you are all well. For those of you in the Northern Hemisphere, I hope you're having a nice spring and early summer! For those of you in the southern Hemisphere with me, I hope your autumn/winter is off to a good start! Take care and keep in touch!

Much love to all of you! Jennifer Nall

Sent: Wednesday, June 01, 2005

Subject: Hello from Julie!

Hello from Brazil! Our mission adventures together for Jesus

...
I am currently in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, ministering to former street boys and girls. For the Children International has had a child sponsorship program set up for them over the past five years and it is good to see their progress!

A Day in the Life . . .

One of the boys, I will name him David for his privacy, called his family to let them know Michael and I were going with him to visit them. I had met David's mother previously and over the years I have been involved in David's life and she had requested our visit. When David called his home, his mother told him, "We don't have any food in the house." After arriving at David's home, Michael, David, and David's brother Robert, went to the store so Michael could bless the family with groceries and we could all eat together. While they were gone, I sat with David's sister Sandra and his mom. Sandra asked me many questions about America such as, "Do you always wear tennis shoes there?" She continued, "We always wear sandals." While we were talking, the oldest sister, Vilma, got home from work. She was out of breath because she had run home so she could spend as much time with us as possible. Two hours later the men returned with groceries. They had walked and then took a 1 hour bus ride just to get to the grocery store and back.

As dinner was cooked, which consisted of rice, beans, potatoes, and tomatoes, David prayed for us and thanked us for bringing joy to a family that feels a lot of pain because the father is an alcoholic and the older brother has HIV and went to live on the street. We then prayed for their family. We prayed that the Lord would bring their loved ones to Himself and cover the family with peace and His presence. Sandra then sang a song for us about the faithfulness of the Lord and we all talked about the times the Lord has been faithful.

I then asked each of David's siblings what type of job he/she would like to have. One said she would like to be a nurse, another a secretary, and the youngest either a singer or a doctor.

We exchanged hugs and got on the bus to take the 3 hour trip back to the home for former street boys. I asked David if his siblings would be able to study to have the jobs they would like. After all, I thought, Vilma, the oldest, had graduated from high school. She is now working as a cashier at a supermarket, providing the only income to support the family. She isn't even able to always bring home enough money for food for the family, after paying for school uniforms and supplies for her siblings. How would she manage the time and money to study? The youngest two children are in school, and not able to get a job.

David responded to my question, "That's why I want to help them." The responsibility and weight that lay on the shoulders of this 17 year-old boy and the shoulder of many children in the third world. I have heard child after child in this home for former street children tell me, "My dream is to help my mom get out of the slums."

Many believe that the path out of physical poverty lies in education. However, how do those who want the education, but are unable to get it, get out of their poverty?

It's another one of those times when I say, "Lord, help! There's so much need. What do you want me to do?" May we, as Christ's body, never stop seeing the world in its' sobering reality and asking that question. In the moment we stop asking that question, this world in all of its' confusion will cease to have shelter. Christ in us is the light of the world and we are his hands and feet.

We are asking the Lord what he would have us do to be the light of Christ to David's family. Please pray with us.

Out of your support, Michael and I will be paying the \$275 school

and equipment fee required for someone to receive training to be a hairdresser. The ministry here has established a relationship with a man who lives with his pregnant wife on the street. He and his wife look for plastic to collect and sell every day. They are trying to care for themselves, but are unable to obtain a job. \$275 might as well be a million dollars for this couple. Thank you for investing in their lives and in the life of their unborn child. We pray this training will be a hand up out of their physical poverty as the ministry continues to minister to their spirits.

Lord, may your kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven. May you work through us to make it so.

All for Jesus,

Julie and Michael

Click here for website: <http://www.forthethechildreninternational.org/>

Tell me what you think of **www.CrimsonWhite.org**. Critique it. What did we leave out? What would you suggest as a possible change? There are (probably always will be) a couple things to update (already) or change. It is **NOT** a way to deliver the C&WC, that will still come by 'snail-mail.' The site is an easy way to introduce someone, or a church, to a few back issues and what we are about and what we believe. The site also has links to finding Christian radio stations across the country and several other resources. – ACTS International has just given permission to use their "How to be a Christian without being religious." That will be the salvation plan to be added under What We Believe.

PLEASE, keep your home and school and summer addresses current with us. Did you graduate? For most college folks, that means your campus P.O.Box isn't valid any more. I'll assume you moved "home," but that may not be right. Please confirm your address.

Personal apology.

I apologize for the lapse in getting the C&WC to print as often as usual the past couple months. Teaching has been VERY stressful and time and energy consuming. I WILL catch up and promise to hit our target of 18 issues for the year, making it an average of once every 3 weeks for the year.

Wanted to pass two things along to you, possibly for the C&W. Matt
EGO: Easing God Out

"If we run to God with the pain, then run to Him with the suffering, we can watch Him be strong in us. We cannot let that pain define us but shape us, shape our soul and our heart. And the shaping always enlarges our capacity to love." -Steven Curtis Chapman (CCM Magazine, Feb. 2003, Lisa Tedder (author of article))

Just for fun... (from deep in the mail bag) ...

Subj: **And God created...**

From: [ken.tucker@... .com](mailto:ken.tucker@...)

And God populated the earth with broccoli and cauliflower and spinach, green and yellow vegetables of all kinds, so Man and Woman would live long and healthy lives.

And Satan created McDonald's. And McDonald's brought forth the 99-cent double-cheeseburger. And Satan said to Man, "You want fries with that?" And Man said, "Super size them." And Man gained pounds.

And God created the healthful yogurt, that woman might keep her figure that man found so fair.

And Satan froze the yogurt, and he brought forth chocolate, nuts and brightly colored sprinkle candy to put on the yogurt. And woman gained pounds.

And God said, "Try my crispy fresh salad."

And Satan brought forth creamy dressings, bacon bits, and shredded cheese. And there was ice cream for dessert. And woman gained pounds.

And God said, "I have sent you heart healthy vegetables and olive oil with which to cook them."

And Satan brought forth chicken-fried steak so big it needed its own platter. And Man gained pounds, and his bad cholesterol went through the roof.

And God brought forth running shoes, and Man resolved to lose those extra pounds.

And Satan brought forth cable TV with remote control so Man would not have to toil to change channels between ESPN and ESPN2. And Man gained pounds.

And God said, "You're running up the score, Devil." And God brought forth the potato, a vegetable naturally low in fat and brimming with nutrition.

And Satan peeled off the healthful skin and sliced the starchy center into chips and deep fat fried them. And he created sour cream dip also.

And Man clutched his remote control and ate the potato chips swaddled in cholesterol. And Satan saw and said, "It is good." And Man went into cardiac arrest.

And God sighed and created quadruple bypass surgery.....

And Satan created HMO's.

SIN - Self Interest Now

Lonnie B

Words ...

A variety of thoughts on words ...
some serious, some just for fun.



Prov 27:6 *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*



“And let my words be few.

Jesus, I am so in love with You.” Philips, Craig, & Dean

Priorities. - What is the greatest commandment? The first and greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart and soul and mind. The second is to love your neighbor as yourself. On these two are all the laws of the prophets.

Sonic Flood - **“Resonate”** - What is it to resonate? To vibrate in sync with. To move in sync with God!

Speak kind words; hear soft echos.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” Words can bruise and hurt even deeper, to the spirit and soul.

The English Language

There is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger; neither apple or pine in pineapple. And while no one knows what is in a hot dog, you can be pretty sure it isn't canine.

English muffins were not invented in England nor French fries in France.

Sweetmeats are candies, while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square, and guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write, but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce, and hammers don't ham?

If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth, beeth? One goose, 2 geese. So one moose, two meese? Is cheese the plural of choose? One mouse, 2 mice. One louse, 2 lice. One house, 2 hice?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught?

If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

Why do people recite at a play, and play at a recital? Ship by truck or car and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell? Park on driveways and drive on parkways?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

How can the weather be hot as heck one day and cold as heck another? When a house burns up, it burns down. You fill in a form by filling it out and an alarm clock goes off by going on. You get in and out of a car, yet you get on and off a bus. When the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible.

And why, when I wind up my watch, I start it, but when I wind up this essay, I end it?

English is a silly language ... it doesn't know if it is coming or going!!!

A man is driving up a steep, narrow mountain road. A woman is driving down the same road. As they pass each other, the woman leans out of the window and yells “PIG!!!” The man immediately leans out of his window and replies, “WITCH!!!”

They each continue on their way, and as the man rounds the next corner, he crashes into a pig in the middle of the road. If only men would listen.

[I heard this story in a movie about paradigms. We interpret what we hear based on OUR paradigms. We need to listen to the messages.]

Learn To Keep Time

A musician who joined an orchestra on a cruise ship was having difficulty keeping time with the rest of the band.

Finally, the captain said, “Either you learn to keep time or I'll throw you overboard. . . . It's up to you, sync or swim.”

A child comes up to their dad and says, “I know what the word Bible means.”

“What do you mean you know what the word Bible means?”

“I do know.”

“Okay,” says the dad. “Tell me what the word Bible means.”

“It is short for Basic Information Before Leaving Earth.”

So there's this Wizard who worked in a factory. Everything was satisfactory except that certain miscreants, taking advantage of his good nature, would steal his parking spot.

This continued until he put up the following sign: “This parking space belongs to the Wizard. ... Violators will be toad.”

Rules for Writers

[Save these for when you have to write a paper when school starts again.]

1. Verbs HAS to agree with their subjects.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.
4. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
5. Avoid clichés like the plague. (They're old hat.)
6. Be more or less specific.
8. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are (usually) unnecessary.
9. Also too, never, ever use repetitive redundancies.
10. No sentence fragments.
11. Don't use no double negatives.
12. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.

[Save this for your Statistics class. You got it in a published source, right here.]

43.3% of statistics are meaningless!

“Feelings” and “emotions” are more than just words
Feelings and emotions happen. Acting on them is a choice. - Dr. L. Schlessinger, 10/14/98

6/5/05 - RRD - He called in to the Deliah radio show on this Sunday evening asking for a song. It was “their song.” They had met in October. They got engaged in November. They will be married in July. She is 3 months pregnant. - They acted on too many of their feelings.

I had a student that dropped out in February and was enrolling in a correspondence program to finish HS. In March she came by and asked for my address so she can send a wedding invitation (!) for September. Exam week she comes by and says the wedding is postponed until the end of December, after the baby comes, around December 5th. - They acted on their feelings and emotions and hormones, etc. We know how they celebrated getting engaged.

Why do we “dress to kill”?

The Answer: (MailBits.com: Trivia Date: 10/11/99)

“I could just kill you.” “You slay me!” “That exam was a killer!” If a linguist from outer space were to land here to study the English language, he or she or it could reasonably conclude that we were all homicidal maniacs. Never mind “if looks could kill,” it's a good thing that our words don't go around armed.

We even dress in the spirit of mayhem. We may dress for success to make an impression in the business world. But to impress people under other circumstances, including romantic ones, we dress to kill. Why? Basically, it's the cave man and woman under our civilized surface. It invokes the literal conquest of the opposite sex, the making of a “kill.” Club her/him on the head and drag the victim back to the cave. - I tell you, sometimes English can be just murder!

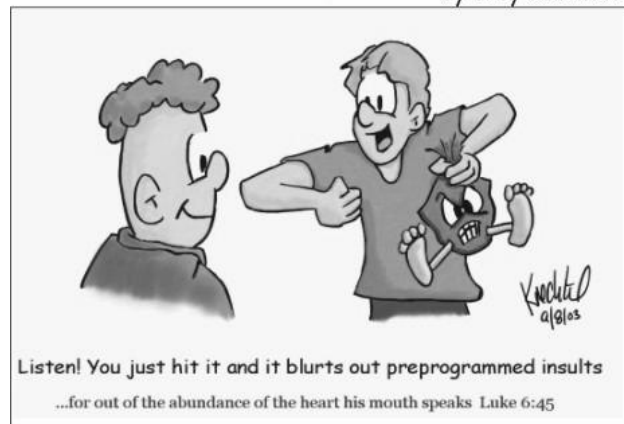
(Source: BREWER'S DICTIONARY OF PHRASE AND FABLE) <http://mailbits.com/Trivia/Source/82.htm>

Teflon was discovered in 1938. It could have been discovered earlier, but the idea just didn't stick.

There are many phobias. They include apophobia (fear of bees), belonephobia (fear of sharp, pointed objects), and latrophobia (fear of doctors). Where I come from we don't need fancy Latin-like words for these. We describe all of those things as “common sense.” (Source: Fascinating Facts)

KARTOON KNUGGETS

By Troy Knechtel



<http://www.christiancartoons.com/kartoons> copyright 2003

*I have always thought the actions of men
 the best interpreters of their thoughts.*

(And words are part of their actions, too.)

"As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Proverbs 23:7 — Solomon

Solomon wrote some more about words:

Proverbs 15 (KJV)

¹A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.
²⁶The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the LORD: but *the words* of the pure *are* pleasant words.

16: ²⁴Pleasant words *are* as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

17: ²⁷He that hath knowledge spareth his words: *and* a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

²⁸Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: *and* he that shutteth his lips *is esteemed* a man of understanding

18: ⁸The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

23: ⁹Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

23: ¹²Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.

26: ²²The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Ecclesiastes 5 (KJV)

3: a fool's voice *is known* by multitude of words.

10: ¹²The words of a wise man's mouth *are* gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. ¹³The beginning of the words of his mouth *is* foolishness: and the end of his talk *is* mischievous madness.

¹⁴A fool also is full of words:

10: ¹⁴A fool also is full of words:

And the FINAL words from Solomon...

Ecclesiastes 12: ¹³Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.

¹⁴For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

Can we talk about sex? Is sex something we should or shouldn't talk about in church? The cover/lead article of the May 2005 issue of *Christianity Today* is about sex, or not sex, ahhh, chastity as a Christian discipline. Not just "not having sex" but being disciplined. Chastity before marriage and chastity IN marriage.

Here's the beginning of the article and the web address to read the whole article. [Printed here under CT guidelines.]

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/005/34.28.html>

[Christianity Today Magazine](#) > [Hot Issues](#) > [Sexuality & Gender](#)

Christianity Today, May 2005

Sex in the Body of Christ

Chastity is a spiritual discipline for the whole church.

by Lauren F. Winner | posted 05/13/2005 10:00 a.m.

A word like chastity can set our teeth on edge. It is one of those unabashedly churchy words. It is a word the church uses to call Christians to do something hard, something unpopular.

Chastity is one of many Christian practices that are at odds with the dictates of our surrounding, secular culture. It challenges the movies we watch, the magazines we read, the songs we listen to. It runs counter to the way many of our unchristian friends organize their lives. It strikes most secular folk as curious (at best), strange, backwards, repressed.

Chastity is also something many of us Christians have to learn. I had to learn chastity because I became a Christian as an adult, after my sexual expectations and mores were already partly formed. But even many folks who grow up in good Christian homes, attending good Christian schools, and hanging out with good Christian friends—even these Christians-from-the-cradle often need to learn chastity, because unchaste assumptions govern so much of contemporary society.

I am not an expert on chastity. I am not a theologian or a member of the clergy. I'm just a fellow pilgrim. I offer only a flawed example, a few suggestions, and the reminder of why, as Christians, we should care about chastity in the first place.

Two-Thirds Unvirgin World

One reason we should care right now is because of the unchaste culture we find ourselves in. About 65 percent of America's teens have sex by the time they finish high school, and teenage "dating" websites that boast millions of members encourage teenage patrons to select not prom dates but partners for casual sexual escapades. A 2002 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 41 percent of American women aged 15 to 44 have, at some point, cohabited with a man. According to the 2000 census, the number of unmarried couples living together has increased tenfold between 1960 and 2000, and 72 percent between 1990 and 2000. Fifty-two percent of American women have sex before turning 18, and 75 percent have sex before they get married. According to a 2002 study by the Kaiser Family Foundation and *Seventeen* magazine, more than a quarter of 15- to 17-year-old girls say that sexual intercourse is "almost always" or "most of the time" part of a "casual relationship."

Christian communities aren't immune to the sexual revolution. Three surveys of single Christians conducted in the 1990s turned up a lot of premarital sex: Approximately one-third of the respondents were virgins—that means, of course, that two-thirds were not.

True Love Waits, a popular Christian abstinence program with roots in the Southern Baptist Convention, was founded in 1993. The program asks teens to make the following pledge: "Believing that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, my friends, my future mate, and my future children to be sexually abstinent from this day until the day I enter a biblical marriage relationship." In 2001, a study of 6,800 students showed that virgins who took the pledge were likely to abstain from sex for 18 months longer than those who did not take the pledge. Abstinence advocates touted this as good news, but actually it is troubling—it means simply that a lot of abstinence pledgers are having sex at 19 instead of 18. This is hardly a decisive victory for abstinence.

As one reporter summarized the findings, "The pledge was more effective among 16-year-olds than 18-year-olds; there was no entirely conclusive evidence about its effectiveness among 15-year-olds; and it was only effective among those surveyed so long as less than 30 percent of their classmates took it. It had to be popular, but not too popular. Pity the poor policymaker who's supposed to act on these findings, navigating the incomprehensible logic of high-school cliques and identity politics." The study, which was conducted by sociologists at Columbia and Yale, also showed that students who broke the pledge were less likely than their non-pledging peers to use birth control—presumably in part because the use of birth control implies that you thought about sex beforehand; you *planned* for it. The culture among Christian singles dictates that the sin is somehow less grave if you got swept up in the heat of the moment.

In 2003, researchers at Northern Kentucky University showed that 61 percent of students who signed sexual-abstinence commitment cards broke their pledges. Of the remaining 39 percent who kept their pledges, 55 percent said they'd had oral sex, and did not consider oral sex to be sex. (Anecdotally, a roughly equivalent percentage of self-identified evangelical college students I recently spent the day with said they don't consider anal intercourse to be sex.)

Luke Witte, an evangelical Presbyterian pastor at Forest Hill Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, says he asks engaged couples to cease having sex before their wedding. "I won't marry a couple that is sexually active," he insists. "There are biblical reasons. We're asked not to fornicate." But Witte, interviewed for a 2002 *New York Times* article, acknowledged that he has to have the chastity talk with most of the engaged couples that ask him to marry them. "More often than not," he says, "there's a sexual relationship" before the couple ties the knot.

In 1992, *Christianity Today* surveyed more than one thousand of its readers. Forty percent said they'd had premarital sex. Fourteen percent said they'd had an affair. Of those who had cheated on their spouses, 75 percent were Christians at the time of the affair.

I wanted to get a sense of how the struggles of single Christians to stay chaste were playing out in my neighborhood, so I spoke to Greg Thompson, a campus pastor with Reformed University Fellowship at the University of Virginia. Charlottesville is, in many ways, a pretty conservative place. I thought if any corner of the church would exemplify chastity, it might be here. It seems I was wrong. Greg said that with one exception, every dating couple he has counseled has "talked about sexual failure." Most of these dating couples, he said, are "having serious problems understanding what to do and what not to do with their sexuality. ... I consistently have conversations with Christian students who are either having sexual intercourse, or having oral sex, or taking their clothes off and masturbating each other. Every college pastor I've talked to about this says the same thing: Their students, even those in their leadership groups, people leading Bible studies and so forth, are sexually out of control."

All this suggests to me that our usual strategies for helping people cope with sexuality are not working. Repeating biblical teachings about sex is simply not enough. Urging self-discipline isn't enough. Reminding people of the psychological cost of premarital sex or infidelity is not enough. What we need is something larger and deeper: a clear vision of what chastity ultimately is and the most important context in which it is practiced.

Discipled Sex

What is chastity? One way of putting it is that chastity is doing sex in the body of Christ—doing sex in a way that befits the body of Christ, and that keeps you grounded, and bounded, in the community.

Sex is, in Paul's image, a joining of your body to someone else's. In baptism, you have become Christ's body, and it is Christ's body that must give you permission to join his body to another body. In the Christian grammar, we have no right to sex. The place where the church confers that privilege on you is the wedding; weddings grant us license to have sex with one person. Chastity, in other words, is a fact of gospel life. In the New Testament, sex beyond the boundaries of marriage—the boundaries of communally granted sanction of sex—is simply off limits. To have sex outside those bounds is to commit an offense against the body. Abstinence before marriage, and fidelity within marriage; any other kind of sex is embodied apostasy.

Chastity, then, is a basic rule of the community, but it is not a mere rule. It is also a discipline. **[Go to the website to finish the article]**

Crimson & White Connection

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