

Religion and Chastity*

“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” 1 Timothy 4:12

There are many sexual temptations for youth today. However, social science research shows that religious practice cultivates the virtues necessary for a chaste life in young adulthood:

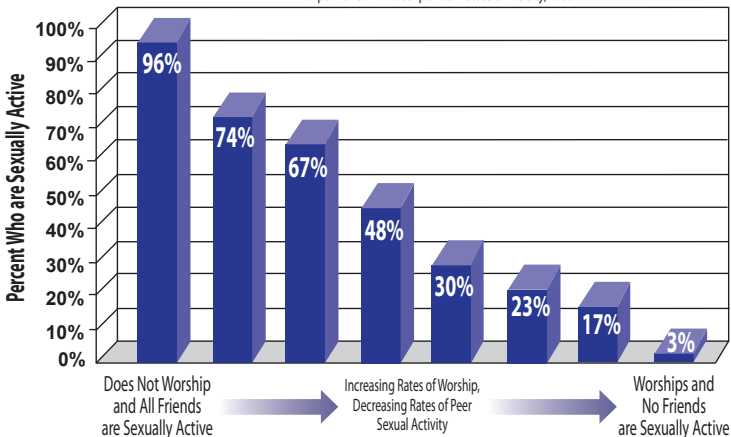
- Young adults who attend religious services often as adolescents are less likely to cohabit than those who did not attend frequently.
- Young adults who attend religious services often as adolescents are more likely to get married than those who did not attend frequently.
- Young adults who value marriage are significantly more likely to be religiously involved.
- Moral beliefs matter too: A young adult who worships weekly and believes in chastity will have fewer partners than a person who worships weekly but sees nothing wrong with premarital sex.
- Young adults’ attitudes towards family and marriage have significant impact upon their religious participation.

Given the influence of religious practice on a person’s sexual choices, what one thing can you do to encourage a growth in personal devotion in your child?

The chart below shows that teenagers who worship and have no sexually active friends are more likely to be virgins than are those who never worship and who have sexually active friends. Church involvement is crucial in helping young people build a good moral foundation for sexuality. The relationship between church attendance and chastity is reciprocal – we must encourage young people to pursue both.

Teen Virginity: Peers and Worship

Note: E.J. Jeffrey Hill, et.al. “Religiosity and Adolescent Sexual Intercourse: Reciprocal Effects.”
Unpublished Manuscript. Utah State University, 1999



For links to the research behind these statements, please visit www.marri.us/one-pagers/

*It bears emphasizing that these patterns hold for the groups involved, not for all the individuals who make up each group. There is naturally a wide variation among individuals.

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

ILLUSTRATING THE WAY GOD MADE MAN



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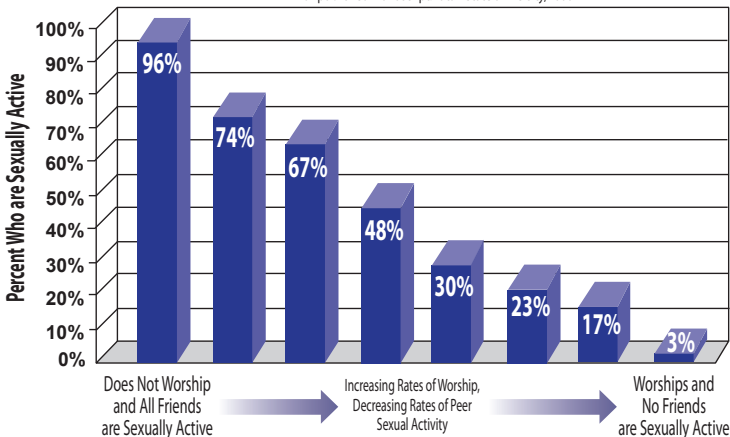
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