

“Yeah, but I have a long history of irrational behavior,” Cait sighed. “When I was in high school, I drank, smoked, stole a car to go joy riding, all kinds of stuff, but I kept my virginity. That was the one thing that seemed to be the true mark of whether or not you were a ‘good’ girl or a ‘bad’ one. As long as I didn’t go ‘all the way,’ and I went more than halfway quite a bit, I was better than all those other girls, especially the ones who got pregnant.”

“I know what you mean,” Amanda nodded. “I wasn’t even going to church

anymore, but I'd been in church until my mom died when I was fourteen, so I knew about the virginity thing too. I was too hurt to even date anyone until I met Will in college. We did a lot more than we should've done, but we didn't go all the way until after we were married. After I got saved, I realized that I really wasn't any better than the other girls. I was technically a virgin, but I wasn't sexually pure. I wonder now if it really was worth the wait."

"I can assure you that it was," Cait said sadly. "It wasn't long after my high school graduation that I slipped and went too far in the back of a boy's pickup. At first I was mortified. I was now one of *them*, the bad girls. I wasn't better than anyone else. About two weeks later at another impromptu party, I got hit on again, and I figured what the heck?" Cait shrugged with a bitter smile. "If I'm bad, I'm bad so what do I have to lose? When I got to the university in Honolulu, I went over the deep end sexually even while I quit drinking as much. I utterly refused the drugs that were widely available in the crowd I was running with. Again, it was that illusion of goodness. It was an area where I was still not one of *them*."

"Okay," Amanda stared at Cait with her head slightly tilted, "but I still don't see how that relates to the question 'is it worth the wait?'"

"That's because it's only part of the answer," Cait stared thoughtfully at Amanda. "I'll get to it if you don't mind if I talk rather frankly."

"You may as well," Amanda grinned wryly. "It's not like I haven't heard plenty of embarrassing coarse talk at work."

"Well, I'm not going to get that bad," Cait's grin was also wry. "The thing is that I think I may've learned something that'll help you understand 'why wait' but I can't figure out how to explain it without being rather blunt."

"Fire away," Amanda nodded. "Maybe it'll help me convince my boys to wait."

"You'll probably have to hold off on this part," Cait laughed lightly. "It may be a little much for a child, and it'll probably be easier for Will to explain it from a guy's perspective."

"I'm intrigued," Amanda drew her knees up and wrapped her arms around them.

"I think you know that because of Brian's injury, we haven't fully consummated our marriage yet." Amanda nodded briefly. Cait's smile was slightly dreamy as she continued. "We *have* been sleeping together, and we've touched each other very intimately. In loving Brian, I've learned that sexual experience doesn't necessarily prepare you to make love."

Amanda frowned but Cait went on quickly. "When you first experience sex in the back seat of a boy's car, there're many factors that keep you from getting the most out of it – guilt of course, but also it's cramped and the fear that someone will catch you and the feverish rush to get to the ... the purpose. It seems heady because you're touching each other in places that invoke explosive

feelings. Then you have sex with someone on a bed or in a room and it seems better. You're not cramped or as rushed and you can really enjoy touching each other more. But the guilt is still there and there's still some fear. The fear isn't so much someone walking in and catching you," Cait sighed with a slightly bitter smile that Amanda didn't understand. "The fear of getting 'caught' by pregnancy or an STD will stay very much alive. You kid yourself into thinking that you're 'protected' but it's more of a deterrent than protection.

"But that stuff I knew before I married Brian. The thing I understand now is that sexual experience can hamper your ability to make love."

Amanda grunted in surprise and disbelief. Cait frowned thoughtfully before she continued.

"When I was a kid, I got to ride Grandpa's horses on his farm in Georgia. When I first started riding, I was too excited to pay attention to what he was trying to teach me about riding. I merely learned how to get on the horse and make it go where I wanted. When I was in college I went riding with a friend who really knew how to ride since she'd grown up on a ranch in New Mexico. She told me that while I could sit on the horse and get from point A to point B, I didn't ride well. Because I didn't know how to properly ride, I made things harder for myself and utterly annoyed my horse.

"It's kind of like that with sex. Though I have more sexual experience than Brian does, he's the one who's been showing *me* how to make love. He slows me down to enjoy the journey rather than getting all in a rush to get to the goal. When he asks what feels good, I know he wants an honest answer. He doesn't expect a yes answer because he's already had success with that move," Cait glanced away from Amanda and blinked back tears. "Sadly enough, I'm still trying to unlearn some of the things my previous sexual partners taught me. Brian doesn't necessarily like the things some of them liked."

Cait seemed to shake herself then smiled softly. The mist in her eyes was no longer from tears. Her stare was slightly unfocused as if she was seeing a wonderful memory rather than the dresses in her closet. "Even though we haven't gotten the full benefit of marriage yet, I want to bring Brian pleasure not because it assures me I'm a good lover, but because I love to see his pleasure for its own sake. It's the same for him with me. Unfortunately, I suspect I'll be working on those bad habits for a while. I've learned that there's a huge difference between making love and just getting to a sexual climax. Without a past to interfere, Brian's had a much easier time making love to me than I've had learning to make love to him. I don't know if sex is better for people who wait, but I am sure that making love is much easier to get to without experience."

"I guess you have a point," Amanda slowly nodded her head. "Now that I think about it, it *was* different making love with Will after the wedding than making out with him before. We both accepted things just because the other one thought it would be good but it really wasn't. I guess that's the difference

between hunting and having the safety of a commitment.”

“Well put, and it is a powerful point,” Cait smiled then skewered Amanda with an intense stare, “but the practical aspect of sexual purity isn’t the most important part. Brian told me about his parents’ sex talks, which were still pretty simple because he was only ten when they died. The two things that stood out the most for me was that his dad told him that if he waited, it would be better than baseball, ice cream and watermelon on the Fourth of July. Brian’s mom talked about how virginity was part of his walk with Jesus, and his girlfriends needed to be part of that walk too.”

“Yeah, he told me about those talks too,” Amanda nodded.

“Here’s the thing though,” Cait said earnestly. “We can never be absolutely sure that Brian’s dad was right, that waiting for sex until you’re married *feels* that much better than doing it with whomever whenever you want. There can never be any empirical evidence for it because there’s no way for someone to do *both* and report which was better. But one thing I am sure of is that I won’t have any guilt about it when I finally get to have sex with Brian! I had plenty guilt all the times before. But realistically I have to admit that the guilt doesn’t come from actually having sex. It comes from the knowledge of the sin.”

“I think I understand what you’re saying but I’m not really sure,” Amanda frowned thoughtfully.

“Okay, try this. Remember how the apostle Paul talked about the law showing us sin?”

Amanda nodded. “He said something about without the law we wouldn’t know what sin was.”

“That’s right,” Cait nodded. “The law tells us we need a redeemer because it shows us we’re guilty. Until we know the law, we don’t know we have guilt.”

“So,” Amanda thought she got Cait’s point, “what you’re saying is that lots of people don’t feel guilty over sex outside of marriage because they don’t know the law.”

“That’s right! One of the things that we’ve got to wrap our minds around is that good and bad, right and wrong isn’t about our *feelings*. It’s about obeying God even if we don’t see a benefit.”

“Then Brian’s mom was closer to the truth than his dad?” Amanda asked with a puzzled frown.

“Yes and no,” Cait smiled. “There is a practical aspect of waiting for sex. Brian will never know the guilt of pre-marital sex, so yeah, it’s going to be better for him. Would the physical charge of the sexual experience with me be less if he *hadn’t* waited? We’ll never know, but I sure hope not because that means *I’ll* never get to the really great stuff since I had lots of sexual experiences when I was younger. Will I have great sex with Brian or merely good sex? I think I’ll have great sex with Brian because regardless of what I did in the past, I *am* sexually pure *now*.”

“But if you can still have great sex if you aren’t a virgin when you get married, why wait?” Amanda still couldn’t quite grasp what Cait was trying to show her. “Why not just enjoy sex with as many people as you can, then when you find the right one, restore your sexual purity before you get married?”

“Oh, that would work well,” Cait said sarcastically. “Come on, Amanda. I’ve seen how you look at Will. It’s a major struggle for you to keep your hands off of him.”

Amanda blushed but didn’t deny it.

“When Will first left, it was even harder, wasn’t it?” Cait asked. “You ached for him, didn’t you?”

Amanda nodded, her eyes filling with tears. These last few weeks had brought back that longing.

“Becoming sexually pure once you’ve had experience isn’t easy,” Cait said sadly. “It’s only with God’s help that you can do it right, but that’s true of all of life. We can’t really do it right without God’s help.”

“I can’t deny that,” Amanda said emphatically.

“Aside from the practical problem of increased desire, we also have to remember that Paul warned us to not let our Christian liberty become license. We’re not supposed to deliberately sin because we know we can be forgiven.”

“I vaguely remember that,” Amanda frowned. “Do you know where it is?”

“I think it’s in 1 Corinthians but I’d have to find it with a concordance to make sure,” Cait said thoughtfully. “If I recall correctly, and I don’t always, it’s in with that stuff about doing the things for the right reason.”

“You mean the part about don’t eat meat that’s been sacrificed to idols if it’s going to bug someone else?”

“Yeah, that part. Paul talks about how everything comes down to doing it for the right reasons. He was talking about not making your brother stumble, but the greater idea applies to sexual purity too. Do it for the right reasons,” Cait leaned forward earnestly. “If we’re doing it for us, not for God, it doesn’t really mean anything.”

“That’s not true!” Amanda gasped in surprise.

“Do you believe there are degrees of sin?” Cait challenged her. “Do you think some are worse than others?”

“Not really,” Amanda frowned slightly. “Any sin, even a little white lie, will send you to hell if you haven’t been redeemed by Jesus.”

“When Paul made lists of sins, he included lying, envy and anger right alongside sexual sins and murder,” Cait suddenly leapt to her feet and began pacing in the small area. “When we keep our virginity for ourselves, it’s because we are better than others. That’s pride! Pride is a sin. If we keep our virginity for the gain we will get – great sex when we’re married – that could easily be greed. But see, if we keep our virginity just because God said to do it, period, end of statement, that’s the reason that keeps our sexual purity in proper perspective.

God says what's right and wrong and it *stays* right and wrong regardless of our feelings *or* our benefit. There was nothing special about the fruit that grew on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. There wasn't a poison in the flesh of it that would physically destroy the man and the woman that made it inedible. It was simply inedible because God *commanded* that it not be eaten. The fruit wasn't at fault when sin came into the world, the man's disobedience was the cause of sin coming into the world."

Amanda stared at Cait, awed by her passion for this subject. Cait was far from finished.

"We like to talk about our worldly benefits for obedience to God – tithe and God gives you a hundredfold in return, keep your virginity and you'll have great sex with your spouse – but the benefit isn't always there! There was no physical benefit to the ancient Jews not eating pork, but they *did* indeed sin if they ate it. Why? Because God said it was a sin! Amanda, don't you see that things don't always have to have a logical worldly blessing to be worth doing? God should be obeyed even if we *don't* see a physical blessing out of it.

"In fact, Jesus obeyed God and suffered greatly! No Amanda, we obey God simply because he *is* God and therefore is worthy of our obedience. If that's not enough reason to follow him, he *redeems* us when we do mess up. He restores us. We can't do it for ourselves, restore what we've lost. See, if we're doing the virginity thing for our gain, once it's gone, there's nothing left to save, so why not do like I did and say to heck with it? But if we're doing it for God – keeping our sexual purity instead of just keeping our virginity which some day we want to give up to our spouse *anyway* – if we're keeping our sexual purity for God, then if we mess up and lose our virginity, he can still restore our sexual purity! That's what matters most. *Sexual purity* is what we want to keep for a lifetime!

"Sexual purity is doing sex God's way. It doesn't end when you get married. You still need to be sexually pure. Before you get married, sexual purity means not having sex of any kind. After you get married, sexual purity requires that you *do* have sex with your spouse! That's God's plan for sex. The only way we're *ever* pure in *any* way is when we live life according to God's plan."

"I think I get what you're saying," Amanda stared at Cait with wide eyes. "So does that mean that Brian's dad was wrong to teach him to keep his virginity for the blessing's sake?"

"Oh no! He wasn't," Cait shook her head vigorously. "Brian was only ten when his dad died. He was a child. He needed to be taught in a way a child could understand, but when we grow up, we have to put off childish ways. But because he was on the threshold of manhood, Brian's mom was already leading him into thinking like a man, which is being more concerned about whether or not you do God's will than needing a reason to do it. I really think that one of the reasons so many young people don't keep virginity pledges is that they're doing it for pride or for personal gain, not out of love for God."

“You’ve certainly thought this through,” Amanda said in awe.

“Not until recently,” Cait confessed sadly, dropping back down beside Amanda. “Truthfully, I’ve been praying about it a lot, struggling with it since Brian first told me that he was still a virgin. I thought that made him better than me, but God reminded me of David.”

“David? As in King David?”

“Yeah. He was a man after God’s own heart, but he had a *long* list of sins, longer than most contemporary Christians realize. But when God looked at him, he saw a repentant heart. David *always* repented when he saw his sin. That’s what defines whether we’re ‘good’ or ‘bad’ – our state of repentance, *not* what the sins were that we had to repent of. A serial killer who’s repented and accepted Jesus as his savior is more ‘good’ than an unredeemed ninety year old grandmother who’s so sweet she won’t even kill a fly. It’s not what we’ve done that affects our salvation, it’s what God’s done. Like David, we too can be women after God’s own heart, but don’t you think King David would’ve been better off if he’d obeyed God in all areas, if he’d never fallen?”