**“Abstinence is Reasonable**” by David Diestelkamp via [*Think on These Things*](http://thinkonthesethings.com/)

"*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication*" ([I Thess. 4:3](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/I%20Thessalonians%204.3)).”

Society is totally confused. It wants people to be reasonable (thinking, logically) about sex. It wants them to think about civil law, time and place (decency), disease, pregnancy, “protection,” etc. It wants boundaries, thought and self-control in these areas, but when it comes to abstinence it is thought “unreasonable” to expect people to maintain boundaries, thought and self-control. People think abstinence is unreasonable because they don’t understand sanctification. Couples give in to sexual temptation because they forget their sanctification. The world thinks it strange and speaks evil of those who “*do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation*” because they do not accept sanctification ([I Peter 4:4](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/I%20Peter%204.4)). **Abstinence happens for Christians because they are sanctified, not because they have commandments that shame or intimidate them**, or because they have no sex drive. Sanctification changes who we are and through that, what we do.

**Singles –** God made our bodies. He knows what is best for us. He knows what we are designed for: “*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body*" ([I Cor. 6:19-20](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/I%20Corinthians%206.19-20)). That’s right, God made us — sex organs, hormones, desires, and all — to glorify Him.

The world takes a “*foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods*” ([I Corinthians 6:13](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/I%20Corinthians%206.13)) approach (“*sex for the body and the body for sex*”). Paul answers: “*Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two,’ He says, ‘shall become one flesh.’ But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him*” ([I Cor. 6:13-18](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/I%20Corinthians%206.13-18)).

We “*flee fornication*” ([I Cor. 6:18](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/I%20Corinthians%206.18)) because in response to the cross we are giving ourselves to God in all things. We see ourselves as “*joined to the Lord*.” Therefore, abstinence is not simply about waiting until marriage, it is **about serving the Lord with our bodies right now**! Sexual abstinence works because our inner person wants to please the Lord more than it (or our body) wants to please self or another.

Sanctification is reasonable. It helps us arm ourselves to make good decisions. It puts our self-worth and self-esteem in God’s great love, not in someone else’s fickle love. It connects us with God who wants us for eternity, not just for momentary passing pleasure. It even helps us develop refusal skills as we learn in Christ to “*make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts*” ([Rom. 13:14](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%2013.14)). Sanctification answers the question, “What do we do with ourselves?” We serve the Lord! Now the answer to the question, “Why did God give us sexual desires and sex?” Marriage!

**Married – Sanctification doesn’t mean abstinence, it means spiritual purity through submitting to a relationship with God through Christ**. Sexual intercourse is only right between a husband and wife in a marriage formed in keeping with God’s law. “*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge*” ([Heb. 13:4](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Hebrews%2013.4)). Sex in marriage isn’t dirty or sinful because it is in keeping with our submission to the will of God. From the beginning this has been right and reasonable: “*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall be one flesh*” ([Matthew 19:5](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matthew%2019.5); [Genesis 2:24](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Genesis%202.24)).

God designed marriage to be the primary fulfillment of sexual desire and solution to sexual temptation: “*Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband*” ([I Cor. 7:2](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/I%20Corinthians%207.2)). This requires that the needs, wants, and desires of one’s spouse be willingly met as though they were their own: “*Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does*” ([I Cor. 7:3-4](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/I%20Corinthians%207.3-4)). Depriving one another is only to happen by consent, and then only for a time, “*and come back together again so that Satan does not tempt you*” ([I Cor. 7:5](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/I%20Corinthians%207.5)). Abstinence can increase desire to the point of strong temptation. Sexual selfishness, blackmail, revenge, etc., is dangerous and a violation of our commitments to God and our spouses. Our world is a very sensual and immoral place. Christians don’t avoid sexual sin by denying this. They marry. It is “*better to marry than to burn with passion*” ([I Cor. 7:9](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/I%20Corinthians%207.9)). Husbands and wives don’t cope with the cultural inundation of sexual temptation by somehow imagining that Christians don’t feel sexual urges or think sexual thoughts — they fulfill the desires of their spouses. Just as husbands and wives want to be the “best” at things for their spouses, Christians try to be the best lovers to their spouses and want them to be the most sexually fulfilled that anyone can be. Sanctification in Christ makes us better spouses, for God and for our spouses.

**Abstinence?** Although under normal circumstances a married person is not abstaining from sexual intercourse, faithfulness in marriage does imply abstinence from sex with others — abstinence from adultery. Adulterers are enemies of God ([James 4:4](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/James%204.4)), do not inherit the kingdom of God ([I Cor. 6:9](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/I%20Corinthians%206.9)), and receive God’s judgment ([Heb. 13:4](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Hebrews%2013.4)). Adulterers act contrary to and without regard to sanctification.

Marriage does not free one from self-control. Marriage can awaken desires which cannot always be immediately fulfilled. In the absence of one’s spouse, someone else is never an option. Ultimately, sanctification, not romantic love, attraction, or even sexual satisfaction, is what keeps us from adultery. “*How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*” (Joseph to Potiphar’s seducing wife – [Gen. 39:9](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Genesis%2039.9)).“*But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints*” ([Eph. 5:3](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ephesians%205.3)).