

**“Your Opinion About Abstinence Reflects Your Worldview.”**  
**By Doug Anderson**

One of the Biblical principles that this nation was founded upon was that of self-government: the importance of individual citizens voluntarily restraining their sinful desires so their conduct would be lawful and honoring to God. Self-government is the outward evidence of inward morality. It is the basis for true liberty.

The issue of abstinence outside of marriage is strongly reflective of this principle of self-government. Scripture clearly condemns both adultery (sex by a married person with someone other than their spouse) and fornication (sex by a non-married person). The key to God’s standards is not to declare that sex is bad, but that it is only good when it stays within its proper limits of the marriage bed. The limits God applies to His created beings is to protect us from sexually transmitted diseases, the trauma of having babies born out of wedlock, the temptation of using abortion to cover our indiscretions, and divorce that results from the breach of trust inevitably inflicted between spouses. When individuals voluntarily restrain their sexual activity to the confines of God’s limits by way of abstinence outside marriage, the societal problems that individuals are thus protected from dramatically decline.

So what is the problem with abstinence? Why is it such a controversial issue in this nation today? Simply put, there are many Americans who do not want to practice self-government when it comes to their sexual activity. To be even more blunt; any objections to abstinence outside of marriage is nothing less than a rejection of the principle of self-government in the area of sex.

However, opponents of abstinence typically do not want to admit this, so they must raise objections that deflect their true basis. Rather than to declare that they and others can’t restrain themselves, opponents of abstinence outside marriage argue that abstinence doesn’t work. Yet to argue that abstinence is unworkable is really saying we don’t believe we can restrain ourselves; that we can exercise self-government.

***The Issue as Seen in Current News.***

Bristol Palin, the teenage daughter of former Alaska governor Sarah Palin, has incurred the wrath of many liberals for her announcement that she was pledging herself to abstinence until marriage. Her pledge was a personal one. While she encouraged other teens to do the same, she wasn’t demanding it for others or “forcing” her views on anyone. She merely set a lofty personal goal to not have sex until she was married.

Her goal has been attacked as unrealistic and thus, somehow harmful to teens. On January 25, 2010, ABC’s “Good Morning America” reported on a recent interview of Bristol Palin where Bristol reiterated her goal. The Good Morning America host, Andrea Canning countered Palin’s personal desire to remain abstinent by referring to a 2004 study from Columbia University that found “88 percent of those who made (such a) pledge had sex before marriage, had similar rates of STDs to those who didn’t, and were

actually much less likely to use contraception.” Canning’s conclusion was that such a pledge to be abstinent was “unrealistic.”

That ABC report was extremely deceptive by failing to mention contradictory findings in the study. For example, Canning failed to mention that 99 percent of those in the study who didn’t take the pledge had sex, a difference of more than 1,300 teens out of the 12,000 teens in the study. And not only did they have sex, but they engaged in sex sooner and had more sexual partners. In other words, the pledge noticeably reduced the number of sexual encounters and delayed the encounters: both steps in the right direction even for those who ultimately failed to remain abstinent until marriage. It was also deceptive by ignoring the obvious. It failed to report on the successful results of those who kept their pledge. For them, the goal was realistic and attainable. Moreover, for them, their STD rate was significantly less and, of course the most obvious fact; their use of contraception would be completely unnecessary if they were not having sex. The last piece of deception by the ABC report was to ignore the numerous other abstinence studies that showed much greater rates of success. It is clear that ABC reporting on this issue was driven by an agenda to undermine the goal of abstinence.

Why is it that inspirational stories and lofty goals are always uplifting and encouraged in all other areas of life except when it comes to the goal of abstinence before marriage? We are encouraged to watch or read about a person who overcomes difficult obstacles to achieve something great. As such, we often encourage our children to “reach for the stars,” and to set lofty goals. Even if we don’t achieve the goal, the very process of setting one helps us to move far closer to it than had we not set the goal at all. Thus, even unachieved goals are beneficial. Often our goals seem unrealistic, such as President Kennedy’s goal in 1963 to get an American on the moon before the decade was out. The very existence of that goal changed our actions, our thinking, and ultimately led to a group of NASA engineers and scientists to figure a way to achieve it, despite its difficulty.

Isn’t it a bit odd that people, who have no problem embracing lofty goals in other areas of life, refuse to embrace the goal of abstinence? The excuse that the goal is “unrealistic” is nothing more than a semantic smoke screen. So-called “unrealistic” goals are achieved all the time, and at its basic level, an unrealistic goal is really just a pessimistic label for what others might see as “lofty.”

### ***Our Worldview Matters.***

It is critical for us to recognize that our opinions on abstinence are largely driven by our worldview. A negative view of abstinence as “unrealistic” reflects a rejection of self-government stemming from an evolution-based worldview that believes humans are merely evolved animals with animal instincts that cannot be voluntarily restrained. On the contrary, a positive view of abstinence is consistent with a Biblical worldview that believes that humans have the ability to restrain their own conduct, as they demonstrate in a myriad of ways each and every day. It is consistent with the idea that we are created beings made in God’s image. He made us distinctly different from the animals in that we

have a conscience and a spirit and we are expected to control our own behavior in a responsible way.

While most people intuitively understand that humans are different than animals and hold human beings to a different standard than animals, somehow, when it comes to our sex drive, some people believe we shouldn't try to control ourselves since it is unrealistic to do so. Yet how many wives hold their husbands to a different standard from the animals on the issue of faithfulness, and rightfully so? We should see our teenagers as also capable of controlling their hormones, since they too, are made in the image of God as distinct from the animals.

The ultimate reason for people to reject the principle of self-government and voluntarily restraining our conduct stems from an innate rebellion against God and His standards of righteousness. If they reject God as their authority, then they can reject scripture as their standard. Then there are no moral absolutes and there is no longer a respect for such ideas, beliefs or goals that are based in those Truths. As it says in the book of Judges, with no king in Israel, every man did that which was good in his own eyes. We must recognize that this issue reflects a basic struggle within all of us. We are created beings who must answer to a higher authority; the One who created us. Either we make a decision to submit to that authority or we ignore that authority and suffer the consequences, not just in the life to come, but right now on this earth. Either you respect God or you rebel against Him and His standards; there is no neutral ground.

Prior to Roger Banister's achievement in 1956 of running a sub-four minute mile, no human being had ever run a mile distance in under 4 minutes. To the abstinence opponents way of thinking, to have a goal of running that fast would have been "unrealistic." Yet fortunately, many runners did not accept such a limitation that such a label creates. Instead, they made it their goal, and thanks to that goal, pressed through a barrier that many thought could never be achieved. Today, perhaps only 5% of runners or less achieve that goal, but that should not mean we shouldn't strive for it anyway.

The evolutionary worldview concludes that humans are slaves to their sex drives just like animals and so they pessimistically conclude that abstinence is "unrealistic." A Biblical worldview concludes that humans are different from the animals, have the power to control their sex drives, and that to seek to adhere to abstinence until marriage is a goal that is "lofty." It is also the only goal that is consistent with, and reflects an acceptance of God as the ultimate authority. Self-government is a timeless principle of God. Will we accept it as such or will we reject it? Your view of abstinence reveals your answer.