

CHAPTER ONE

History of Abstinence

Everyone has a history. And everyone has a history in relation to making a decision to participate or to abstain. Webster's dictionary tells us that "Abstaining is denying self of a substance or an activity that one might feel would be detrimental to one's health or person." I, like most everyone, remember making a conscious decision to abstain from drugs, alcohol, and pre-marital sex but not all on the same day or at the same time or for the same reasons. I learned that these decisions, though monumental at the time, were not all that difficult and I came to realize that it was easier to make these monumental decisions than to select the suite or dress I would wear on any given day.

Abstain from Tobacco; At 13 a girlfriend and I tried smoking a couple of cigarettes that we found in an old dresser drawer. They were Camel Cigarettes and contained very strong tobacco with no filter just the nasty tobacco right there in your mouth. After we took a couple of puffs and coughed a while. I realized why it was called a nasty habit and determined for myself that I had no desire to become a smoker. I made that decision right there on the spot and never wavered from it. At the time I remember thinking how gross it would be to dip snuff or chew tobacco, even worse! No, tobacco was not for me. Consequently, I've never had to stop smoking to prevent lung cancer, I've never had yellow teeth or finger nails from smoking, and I always enjoyed a great complexion because I did not wreak it by smoking. Best of all I never endangered anyone else by blowing second hand smoke in their face. I also knew that smoking did not make me look sexy, it would only make me look cheap, easy, and stinky.

Abstain from Alcohol; At 15 the boy I had the greatest crush on called and asked me to go out with him on a date. I was so excited. I couldn't believe I was going out with this absolutely perfect for me guy! I

remember thinking, what will I do if he tries to kiss me and I wondered what color dress I should wear and what perfume fragrance, and all the other things a 15 year old girl thinks about when going on a first date with the boy of their dreams. To make a long story short , we went to a dance party at a friend's house, then for a drive around the lake down town, and then somehow, he got us in the back door of a bar with a disco dance floor. I had never been in such a place and knew my parents would not approve. But I was there and the music was so loud we could not hear each other speak. Then the waitress took our order. I said I wanted a coke, but my date ordered an alcoholic drink for me and for himself. I have no idea what was in the drink but the smell was disgusting. I remembered the bad experience with the cigarette and knew if this drink smelled this bad the taste had to be even worse. I really did not want to embarrass myself by drinking something that would make me strangle or cough or worse. I did not taste the drink. And at that moment in time I made the conscious decision that I would never drink alcohol.

Consequently, I eventually became the driver for many of my friends in my senior class and in college. Because I was the only one sober and not drinking, I drove everyone home from the parties. And what happened with the high school boyfriend? Well, he never asked me out on a date again. But we were friends all through the four years of high school, and at the end of our senior year; he called me on the phone, told me how much he admired me, said he had always known we were meant to be together and asked me to wait for him until he finished college. Though I did not wait for him; I do recall the day of that phone call as one of the sweetest days of my life and a memory I still cherish. Abstaining from alcohol has benefited me in many other ways too but the greatest benefit was being able to take charge and make that decision for myself. Once making the decision to abstain from Alcohol, I felt a great sense of freedom and self assurance. This state of being can not be bought or paid for. Standing by that decision has served me well in many arenas all through my adult life.

Abstaining from Drugs ; I was a freshman in college and was making many new friends. However, it seemed that every party I went to, the majority of the kids were doing drugs. I remembered some friends in high school experimenting with drugs but only one or two. Now the terrain in college was much different. If the kids weren't in-haling or sniffing they were talking about in-haling or sniffing. They looked like hell and they rarely remembered what was going on from one moment to the next. The girls in particular would strip to the waist at parties and then would claim the next day in class that they didn't remember. Getting high and losing your conscious mind for moments or hours at a time was not cool. And as some claimed, why on earth would I reach for God or some spiritual experience with drugs? I didn't get it.

However, I did spend more time considering the proposition of doing drugs a bit longer than expected. I thought about it for several weeks in the anticipation of going with my steady boyfriend to an exclusive fraternity/sorority party where a large majority of the students would be doing drugs. I sat outside on the steps of my apartment that afternoon prior to the party and considered all the data which I had accumulated by my own observation. I determined that day that I was not part of that crowd, that I wanted to be independent in my thinking and that I had dreams and aspirations much more worthy of my time. Consequently, popularity with this group would be the price to pay and I paid it. Three months into my 18th year of life, I made the conscious decision after five or six minutes of contemplation; I would abstain from drugs. Once that decision was made, I was no longer plagued with the thoughts. Best of all the decision never had to be made again. I was and would always be drug free.

Abstaining from Pre-Marital Sex; Invitations to give up my virginity came along at various times during my adolescent years, however, because of attentive and strict parents a continuation of sexual activity would have been nearly impossible as I was not allowed to date the same person more than three times. My friends were apprised at this dating limitation. This information spread throughout the school benefiting me

little in the way of ever having a steady boyfriend. However, I did make a conscious decision to remain sexually abstinent prior to my dating years. I remember this experience as though it were yesterday. I was about 11 years old and I was spending the night with a girlfriend. Her Dad had promised her a convertible car when she turned sixteen and on her 12th birthday her Dad was having a swimming pool installed for her in their back yard. She and I had shopped all day for bathing suites and had come home empty handed. We were just too under developed to wear a two piece or to hold up a bikini. The only suits that fit us were the childish one piece swimsuits with the ruffle around the hips and we refused to be seen in public in such a swimsuit.

After the evening meal she and I sat out doors on her front porch discussing our future life and ambitions. She announced quite boldly that she would have sex before getting married but not with the first boy who asked her. It would have to be someone she really liked a lot and he would have to be really cute and have wealthy parents. “How about you”, she had asked. Taken back by her demonstrative announcement I lost my voice for a few seconds and had to clear my throat. After all I was nine when I figured out that there was something called sexual intercourse and I had never discussed the idea of having sex with anyone. “Well”, I said, “I don’t think so. I have never thought of it”. This was a true statement. At this point in my life I had never thought of having sex. In my mind one did not date until high school and did not think of marriage until college and did not have sex until you were married and ready to have children. I had been raised under the impression that sex was for the purpose of having children. And then I asked a very bold question of my 11 year old friend. “Why would you want to have a baby before you are married?” “Oh, don’t be silly”, she said “there are ways of doing it so that you don’t have to get pregnant!” Now she was really over my head and I couldn’t think of a word to say. I just listened to my overly sophisticated friend as she continued to talk about sex in the near future. Needless to say, I was very proud to see my Mother the next day as she came immediately after breakfast to take me home. Though I did not return to my girlfriend’s house again, a seed

had been planted and from that day forward 'to have sex or not to have sex' became a question in my mind.

I think most fortunately for me the very next summer after turning 12 I ran across a book in the public library written by a minister on sex counseling for engaged couples. Though, I do not recall the authors name or the title of the book, I embraced and understood this man's simple but deep explanation of the purpose of sexual intercourse and how it is expected in marriage between loving married couples. The writer clearly explained the importance of respect and the beauty of the sexual relationship. To me it sounded like a symphony. He further explained that this sexual relationship required certain ingredients; 1. A man and a woman who were together in a committed loving relationship, 2. That they were responsible for each other and for themselves, 3. That their number one purpose in a fulfilling married life was to live for each other's good, 4. That the sexual relation gave them the opportunity to express that common good and care for each other and, 5. that a child or children produced from that relationship would give them all the more reason to develop an even more meaningful and rich relationship. Wow! I was impressed. And at the completion of that book that summer, I knew that my adult life was going to be awesome. All I had to do was trust that I could find the person who wanted to make that commitment with me. Surely there would be someone out there at age 20, 21 or so. Yes, with that dream in sight I made a conscious decision at age 12 and ready for eighth grade that I would remain abstinent until marriage. No way would I mess this up!

Two weeks into the new school year the boy who walked to school with me, my sister, and a large group of friends propositioned me just right then and there right out of the blue. I laughed, shook my head and pretended that I just did not understand what he was talking about. The next day I gave him the name of the ministers book written on a piece of paper and told him this was a great book and he could find it at the library. Not only did he stop walking with our group to school but I don't think we saw this boy again anywhere ever.

So here you see an early history of abstaining. I learned that an adolescent picks up impressions quickly and has the ability to choose for himself. An adolescent has the ability lead, direct, empower self and others, to take ownership of his behavior and to change his mind if and when he or she makes the conscious decision to do so. I loved being an adolescent. I enjoyed the new discoveries , learning how to apply learning to experience, the emotions, the fun, the time to build character.

This too was the time I began to keep a journal to record my experiences, thoughts, and feelings. This was the time I began to read holy writings, to search out better understandings and to seek to aspire to those things higher than self.

As a result of having been an adolescent I have acquired tremendous respect and appreciation for adolescents everywhere. I believe Adults have much to learn from them.

The Legalization of Abortion; It was May of 1973, I was sitting in class when the teacher held up a newspaper with headlines reading, ROCKEFELLERS GIFT TO MOTHERS-ABORTION ON DEMAND ! I couldn't believe it. I had no idea abortion was an issue in the United States and to think of it being legalized was horrifying and difficult to believe. I felt as though someone had just dealt me a hard physical blow with a brick right in the stomach. I remember bending over in my chair as I took the harsh blow. My jaw dropped and my eyes became teary with disbelief. When I arrived home that afternoon, I knew my life would never be the same. A part of me had awoken, that part of me which I had no idea even existed. I felt like a warrior rising from the ashes of defeat bathed in blood but holding a sword and ready for battle! I got on the phone and began to talk to friends far and wide. But no one offered hope of reversing this nightmare.

Within a weeks time I determined to leave school and go back home so I could have a base to work from. It was difficult to walk away from all

that had been built and the education I had so greatly desired, but it seemed to me that duty called and I could go forward with my life until I answered.

There had to be some way of detracting from this horrendous error and soon I was in touch with a band of friends who felt as I. We put together proposed legislation (12 pages) demanding that abortion clinics be licensed and that there be stringent guidelines that would have to be adhered to before a license could be issued. After all even beauty shops were licensed and had to abide by particular guidelines to stay in business. The same was expected of clinics and schools, and all business places. Our legislation also required that the abortion clinics be equipped with life support equipment for both the mother and the child should the child be alive after the abortion (which could happen). The legislation also required that the mother be informed of various counseling agencies where she might go for help with depression and anxiety and other symptoms after the abortion.

The next thing we knew we were at the state legislature lobbying our legislation and then watching to our amazement both houses the State Senate and the House of Representatives pass our bill without one single dissenter. This meant that every abortion clinic in the state had to shut its doors until they could obtain a license. This too would be very difficult, very expensive and time consuming and we knew that some of these clinics would not be able to reopen at all! By the next morning all was in the newspapers and news magazines, this bold legislation had made headlines and our phones were ringing off the hook. CBS, NBC, and all the other major networks wanted to know if we would give interviews. Why we had become famous lobbyist over night! Then our worst nightmare occurred, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed suit against the state declaring our legislation unconstitutional.

It took the four of us two months and two weeks to prepare and present the case. Luckily one of us had just graduated from LSU with a degree in Constitutional law. After presenting the case in Federal Court to a

President Jimmy Carter appointee, Judge Robert Collins, we then waited two years for the judge's decision.

During this time we wasted no time. We determined that we would help establish what we called 'Crisis Pregnancy Centers' from coast to coast across the U.S.. These centers assisted young unwed mothers in helping them to make the decision to give their baby life by going to full term and then either surrendering their baby for adoption or keeping the baby with the help of family, friends, or in some cases the father.

We managed to get funding from many sources including individuals, churches, and community trusts, in order to get these centers up and going. I found myself working with staff members and then learning from others how to interview and counsel these frightened youth who's lives would be forever changed by giving birth to a baby years before they themselves were financially or emotionally able. This experience opened my eyes to many realities in the world and how the Kinsey doctrine of the 1960's and the 1970's had directly affected each young woman that walked into the Crisis Centers. We also learned how to collect helpful data without revealing the young mother's identity or breaking confidences. As incredibly stressful as it was for the young mother and her family, counselors found helping these young women and their unborn babies was a wonderful personal experience.

After about a year of gathering data and making comparisons we realized that the majority of the young women were returning a second time, again pregnant and still unwed. This was not good! We began to realize the stark realities. We were saving the babies but we were not saving the young Mothers! Though we saved the life of the child we were not treating or addressing all of the needs of the Mother. Many of these returning young women would tell us that they had used birth control pills or condoms or other forms of birth control but were still coming in pregnant a second and third time.

Well, what was the problem? Why couldn't these girls learn from their

experience to stay away from the guys who want sex without commitment? The birth control did not save them and the fear and hardship related to raising a baby wasn't changing things for them either. The only answer as we saw it was abstinence. But how could we teach sexually active girls with low self esteem to abstain from sex?

Training in counseling teens was abundantly available from various universities and professional organizations, but there was no resource available offering training in teaching abstinence. No one outside of the churches had anything to offer. We found we were in an area of education not yet traveled.

A week later I got an unsolicited boost which forced me to solve the abstinence resource problem. Dr. S. Cleon Skousen's personal secretary contacted me and asked if I would take time out of my busy schedule to meet with him in Utah and join with him and others in traveling to various states designated on his summer speaking tour. My answer came easy as I was a fan of Dr. Skousen's and participating on his speaking tour was an honor I had never expected. The first state we would visit was Washington. Upon our arrival Skousen asked me to speak on the topic of sexual abstinence. With no preparation and without resources to prepare my speech I stood at the microphone in the University auditorium and said, "If you want your 15 year old daughter to get pregnant then give her birth control and show her how to use it". What I said next, isn't real clear but what is clear is that the audience began to "boo" and tell me to, " sit down and shut up".

However I did not sit down, I continued to speak. As I spoke the audience grew louder until I could not hear my own voice. I do not recall what all I said but I do recall what I felt and I felt it from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet. I realized that I had hit upon something! If speaking to an audience about the benefits and need for sexual abstinence created such a reaction from a hostile audience then what would the reaction be if presented to an audience looking for answers?

SAVING A NATION ; The early fall of that same year brought yet another unexpected surprise. I was asked to attend a meeting at the White House as Dr. Skousen's proxy. So I dusted off my best wool suite and headed to the meeting. Here a small group of writers were called together to answer an important question. The President (Ronald Reagan) wanted to know, "could sexual abstinence be taught in the classroom?" Sitting in the midst of great accomplished writers, and I only a student attendee, I said little. I was the only person in the room who was unpublished but I represented a well known and respected writer who would one day go on to win the Benjamin Franklin award for his incredible historic writings. I had previously met the President as a starry eyed adolescent only two years earlier I had worked on his presidential campaign. In spite of my young age I was able to put my attention on the subject at hand without staring at this President I so much admired.

During the meeting we came to understand that this good President had made himself aware of the damage that Comprehensive Sex Education had caused among the youth in America during the 1970s. He sincerely wanted to stop the increasing numbers of youth from contracting sexually transmitted diseases and the pain of out of wed teen birth. The President felt the solution was to offer an alternative behavior model in order to help reduce the increasing numbers. He was also aware of the HIV-AIDS problems that was yet to raise its head as an epidemic in the United States. To my amazement, none of the writers could answer the presidents inquiry. None of them had written or knew of anyone who had attempted to write a course on sexual abstinence outside of the church communities. None left the meeting without hearing the Presidents charge to determine if such a secular course could be presented successfully in the classrooms.

I spent the next few months working on a course that I felt would meet this need. I used research and studies on child and adolescent development and courses in biology and other dependable sources to put my course together. Then I worked on expanding the course into an

effective youth program. I knew that this topic needed something motivational that would take the student further than just book learning.

During this time of writing and research a large house for our unwed mothers, with a separate building for the doctor's visits together with property for expansion was donated to our center. My good friend and associate felt impressed to write to Mother Teresa ,who's main headquarters was then in California, and ask if she would help us fund this new home for unwed mothers. We named the house Hosanna House and had a group of volunteers there scrubbing it down in preparation for , guess who's arrival? Yes, in reply to our letter, Mother Teresa was coming to Hosanna house to visit! Shortly after this visit Mother Teresa's order set up an on going endowment to help fund the basic expenses for Hosanna House and our programs.

Well, just when we thought life could not get much better, another miracle took place. In mid October I was agreeing to work for an organization that had been awarded a grant to test a non religious classroom curricula for youth in which the outcome would work as a preventive initiative to help reduce out of wedlock teen pregnancies. How perfect! This enabled me to not only use the information I had acquired and put together in my own program but also give me the opportunity to test these concepts.

The funding made it possible to present and evaluate the curriculum in five different geographical locations in the USA. Most would have expected us to use parochial or other church schools for our testing. However, I was determined to produce a product that actually worked under any condition. I had taken the Presidents charge to heart and I believed that there was a formula that could be proven successful. So we selected geographical areas where there were high rates of youth who were already sexually active. We also looked for areas where youth were economically challenged, and subject to drugs and lived in single parent households.

As the teachers presented the course materials we kept an eye on the outcomes. We knew we had the right material and research but finding the presentation formula was the hard part. We wrote and rewrote, back and forth to the drawing board we went, until finally we had it...a formula, a format and a teaching strategy for the adolescent that actually worked.

Our first set of outcomes produced a 27% movement the second, third, fourth, and fifth site outcomes were even greater. Youth who had been sexually active were now abstaining. Furthermore we began to see the youth who gave up sex were more likely to give up other destructive behaviors as well; truancy, experimenting with drugs, alcohol, and pornography. These findings were far greater than what we had expected.

We now knew after three years of evaluations that if we could show a 2% movement among youth from sexually active to sexually abstinent we could go back to the president and say, "Yes sir Mr. President, abstinence education **can** be taught in the classroom". So you can well imagine our excitement with outcome measures of 27% and higher. And for myself and my friends and co-workers, we welcomed the opportunity to share this program with the unwed mothers whom we cared for at Hosanna House and the Crisis Pregnancy Centers nationwide.

That was the very beginning of the Abstinence Health Education movement. Although there were over 600 different abstinence programs operating in the USA. With hundreds more struggling in Europe, Africa, South America, Asia, and the West Indies. The good news is that nearly all have heard of the great success of the ABC program in Uganda and others. So now the emphasis is to teach prevention and good health habits to children as well as the adolescent. Programs offered by AEGIS based out of Utah, SAS Foundation based out of Louisiana, Heritage Foundation based out of South Carolina, and the Governors' International Programs based in the states, Eastern Europe,

and South America, The Right Choice Educational Program based in the West Indies, and the Know How Foundation out of Poland are all fighting this battle which I am proud to call my own. These are the new compass guides to healthy habits for youth and children not only for high risk health prevention but also for helping to eradicate HIV AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.