

## Virginity at Marriage

Those who saw the copy of *The Australian* last Tuesday (13 Dec 1994) could not have missed the kind of photograph the media like to reproduce. The article with it had the lurid title, "Better dead than unwed." The substance of the article was that there has been a reaction in some youth in USA against loose sexual practices, partly in consequence of the scare about AIDS, HIV infection, high divorce rates, sexually transmitted diseases, and many unwanted pregnancies.

The article points out that Americans are more aware than ever before of the consequences of under age pregnancies: poverty, a growing under-class, fatherless families, and a combination of drugs and lack of pre-natal care, which can result in babies with low intelligence. Many young people are making the pledge: *"Believing that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, my friends, my future mate, and my future children to be sexually abstinent from this day until I enter a biblical marriage relationship."*

Christians know from the outset biblical commands like: "Flee fornication." The biblical principle is that any couple becomes "one flesh" in sexual intercourse, even if it is in a brothel (1 Cor 6:16). God's design is that the two who are "one flesh" should permanently commit themselves to each other (Mt 19:6). Christians can be confident that there is also good sense and wisdom in God's commandments for those who "follow the Maker's instructions."

Down through the years many have written books about virginity, holding life-long virginity up as a higher ideal than marriage. That is false asceticism. Virginity doesn't make a person closer to God than married people can be. This kind of thinking was also behind the view that Mary remained a virgin throughout life. Scripture does not support that (Mt 1:25; Mk 3:32).

These days loose relationships are common. People often argue that there is value in trial associations before marriage so that a person can be sure that the partner is a good choice for marriage. Christians should be familiar with good arguments against that, and for virginity at marriage. The best gift that a partner can give his bride or her groom on the wedding day is one's virginity. There is tremendous value in the pledge in the wedding service: "I will keep myself for you only." How can a person fully trust his or her partner after marriage, if he or she has had casual affairs before marriage?

The article discusses a course called "Sex Respect." My comment is that one of the best ways for young people to gain such respect is simply dressing modestly and behaving well. For all, there is the powerful Gospel reason that Paul gives for sexual purity: *"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?"*