



HOW TO SUSTAIN DURING CELIBACY

Waiting for marriage, my journey, my path, my calling.

How can a young person stay on the path of purity?
By living according to your word.

—Psalm 119:9 NIV

A voluntary vow of sexual abstinence is the choice I've made for myself, deciding to refrain from any sexual acts until marriage. To stay true to this commitment, I have actively chosen to distance myself from anything that might lead to sex, including monitoring my thoughts, being selective about what I watch on TV, and the music I listen to. When I do date, I am careful to ensure that the process is carried out with respect and integrity. It has been over eight years since I made this decision to save myself for my future husband, and I am determined to uphold it, even if it means waiting for another ten years or more.

Let me share with you my journey over the past several years, depicting how I have grown in my relationship with Christ. One crucial aspect that I quickly realized was the necessity of wholehearted

commitment. To build and sustain a genuine connection with God, I couldn't afford to be half-hearted, wavering between devotion and indifference. I had to surrender all aspects of my life to Him, without picking and choosing what to give.

To be candid, many of us, as women, tend to keep sex as a means of control and reward for when our partners behave as we desire. We might find ourselves offering our bodies as a token of appreciation. In my case, sex was the one thing I held onto tightly and refused to let go of. I used to convince myself that since I was doing everything else right, maybe continuing to be intimate with the man in my life at that time would eventually lead to marriage. In my flawed thinking, I believed that once I had achieved that, everything, including my relationship with God, would be perfect.

Oh, how mistaken I was! It didn't lead to the blissful embrace of marriage. Instead, I discovered the painful truth – he betrayed my trust and cheated on me with multiple women. He was the person who shared the prime of my twenties, and regrettably, ten precious years of my life were squandered. Despite giving my all in the beginning, his infidelity tested my resilience, and like many strong women, I initially chose to endure the heartache. Nonetheless, I ultimately mustered the strength to sever the ties that bound us. The emotional toll was overwhelming, leaving me feeling sick to my very core.”

During that period, I found myself struggling without leaning on God. I neglected prayer, fasting, and seeking genuine healing, and instead, I turned to alcohol as a crutch. Regrettably, this led to the development of an alcohol addiction, with wine becoming my constant companion. I used alcohol as a means to numb the pain and escape from the harsh realities of life. What began as a simple glass of wine escalated into consuming a whole bottle after work,

another when I woke up in the morning, and two bottles before bedtime. My diet consisted mainly of wine and chips, causing me to lose a significant amount of weight, dropping down to 115 pounds. This was alarming since those in my village who knew me well were aware that I had always had a more substantial physique. Losing so much weight was a major concern for everyone around me, as they questioned my well-being. Reflecting on those times now, it's truly disheartening. I was not in a good place mentally or physically.

I received some bad advice from friends and family members. Surprisingly, not a single person encouraged me to seek solace in my faith or prayed with me during difficult times. Instead, I was given harmful advice like, "You're just stressing yourself out unnecessarily. You'll face problems with the next man anyway, so you might as well settle down with this one." Additionally, they said, "If everything is peaceful at home, and he's fulfilling his responsibilities towards you and the household, why are you stirring up trouble? Don't jeopardize a good thing, Candace; you'll end up single." Lastly, I was told, "All men cheat," but I firmly believe that such a generalization is untrue.

In retrospect, I understand the importance of seeking guidance in my faith and relying on positive influences. It's essential to surround ourselves with people who support our growth and lead us towards healthier decisions.

God has someone out there just for you, someone who desires only you. I am truly grateful that I didn't heed the poor advice that was given to me. My ability to cut off ties is strong, and I must admit, I'm quite proud of it. When it comes to my peace and sanity, I refuse to compromise, even if it means taking some time to navigate through the process. Therefore, I made the resolute decision to pack up and

leave the tumultuous ten-year roller-coaster ride that I once called a relationship.

I walked away from that relationship, and it was tough. Fortunately, I had my aunt to lean on during that challenging time. About a week before I decided to break up with my boyfriend, I reached out to her and asked if it would be alright to stay with her for a little while. She warmly welcomed me with open arms, and I'm incredibly grateful to God for providing me with such a supportive aunt.

While I was staying with her, I experienced some growing pains. I took the opportunity to spend time alone with both God and my thoughts. This introspective period revealed a lot about who I am and helped me understand my next steps as a single woman. It was a significant time of transition for me.

Not long after I moved in with my aunt, a significant turning point came when I received a phone call from my boss. He offered me a second executive role with a signing bonus, and without hesitation, I accepted, leading me to leave Chicago for Louisiana. From the moment I made that decision, it seemed like God started orchestrating opportunities and blessings in my life. I excelled in my new position and was eventually offered the chance to run the highest volume store in Texas. So, I moved to Texas and called it home for the next two years.

While in Texas, my focus was solely on God. During that time, I received an unexpected call to work for a different company, a change that turned out to be both personally and professionally beneficial, affirming my trust in the voice of God. I then made the next move to Georgia, where I embarked on a journey of self-discovery and self-love. Embracing the woman God created me to be, I found strength in my boldness, impactfulness, beauty, and brilliance. It became clear to me that I wanted to live my life for God and be a vessel for His love to shine through me.

My desire was for people to see God's presence in me, rather than merely material possessions like cars, homes, clothes, or wealth. I also came to the realization that I didn't want to follow the same path as some other Christian women I had encountered during my young adult years in church settings. Although they preached abstinence and saving oneself for marriage, their actions didn't always align with their words as they engaged in sexual relationships with their then-boyfriends, now husbands. I want to emphasize that my intention is not to pass judgment on them, but rather to express my genuine desire to be a living example and allow God to work through me. As part of my commitment to my faith, I made the significant decision to give up all sexual acts, embracing a celibate lifestyle. I won't deny that it's been challenging, but staying sober, remaining focused on God, and being dedicated to my goals and dreams have helped me stay on track. Through this journey, I hope to inspire others to walk their own paths of faith and to find the courage to live in alignment with their values and beliefs.

I share my story not to boast but to encourage others to trust in God's guidance and let His love lead their lives. When we surrender to His will, we discover the strength to make choices that honor Him and align with our spiritual journeys, even when the path is not easy.

In sharing my journey, I want you all to know that it is possible to walk this path of faith and self-discovery. It requires dedication, resilience, and unwavering faith in God. By staying true to ourselves and our purpose, we can find fulfilment and be a shining example for others seeking a deeper connection with God.

I had a sincere desire to invite God to dwell within me and dedicate my entire being, including my body, to Him, which led me to commit to abstaining from sex before marriage. Deciding to wait