



# The Purity Ring

What you are about to read is true and accurate to the best of my memory. Names have been withheld in an effort to not embarrass my daughters any more than I already have, by writing this at all. It is my hope that parents of pre-teens will read this and be encouraged. The events that took place and the advice I gave was based on what I knew at the time; as a young single-mother, aged 32.

I became separated and then divorced; a single parent of two girls (17 months apart), at the ripe old age of 24 and 26 respectively. By the time my older daughter (now 34) got her period at age 11, we'd already had "the talk" numerous times about what to expect when and after it came. Shortly afterwards, I gave her what I called, a Purity Ring. In actuality, it was a 14k yellow gold baby's ring on a 14k gold box chain. I chose a box chain because of its strength. The jeweler had explained that because of the

way it was made, of all pendant chains, the box chain would be the least likely to break under stress.

I explained to my daughter that the Purity Ring I was giving her symbolized her virginity. No one else needed to know what it meant; just us. So if anyone asked, it was simply a gift from her mom. I told her that because it was 14k gold, she would never have to remove it; not even to bathe or shower. For gym classes, the chain was long enough that she could tuck it under her uniform and the P.E. teacher would never know she was wearing it. I also expressed to her that I really didn't like the name I was giving this ring, because it could suggest that girls who have sex are no longer pure, but tainted somehow, and I never, ever wanted her to feel that way. To me, I told her, because of the smoothness of the ring; a seemingly endless circle, the ring symbolized something that is still the way it was created; unbroken; intact; nothing added, nothing taken away.

"I believe that it is best that you wait until you get married before you have sex for the first time," I told her. "But I

understand that in today's society (1994), there is pressure all around you to become sexually active long before that. I also realize that once you become a teenager, you might meet a boy that you think you're so in love with, that you may want to have sex with him." I remember her reaction: "Eewww! Ma!" "As much as I want to believe that you would come and talk to me about it first," I continued, "I know that sometimes teens are too embarrassed to talk with their parents about these things, so they often get bad advice from their peers. That's why I'm giving you this Ring.

When the time comes, if the time comes, that you feel like you are so in love that you want to share your body with a boy, you don't have to say a word. Just come to me and put the Ring in my hands. Better yet, you don't even have to put it in my hands if that's too uncomfortable for you. Just leave it somewhere you know I'll see it. Because you will wear it all the time, I will know exactly what it means when I see it where you left it. I promise you that I will not be angry. I will not lecture you. I will simply drive you immediately to the doctor or Planned Parenthood or

somewhere, so we can get better educated about birth control, and get you protected as much as possible. As I've told you, sex is how babies are made, and having a baby is something you should put off until after you have become an adult.

I try to give you and your sister as much information as possible, in an effort to teach you how to think and reason for yourselves. Remember: I will not judge or lecture you. I will simply get you protected. Now in reality, I cannot promise you that I will not try to reason with you more, or talk you out of it while I'm driving you to get protected; but I will keep my promise to get you protected. As much as I think it is best that you wait; I know there's no way that I can be with you every minute of the day, and that ultimately, the choice is yours. So just make sure I see the Ring, and I will get you protected as much as possible. Here's some food for thought: If you're too shy or embarrassed to place this Ring in my hands, then as I said, put it where I can see it. But you should know that if you are too shy or too uncomfortable to put it into my hands, then that will be a good sign for you; to let you know that

you are not yet mature enough to handle being sexually active.”

A couple of years later, when she was 12, I went through the same “ceremony” with my younger daughter. Unlike my older daughter, the younger one lost the necklace multiple times within a year or two. In fact, she kept the first one less than a week! I began purchasing 14k gold bands for her finger instead: she lost those too! I finally gave up.

As the years passed, I continued to talk to my girls about sex and everything else that I could think of to prepare them for life in the world on their own. On March 7th, 2001, approximately three months before her high school graduation, my older daughter turned 18. I told her that I recognized that according to the law, she was now an adult. I didn’t know better back then, and although I had my suspicions, I accepted that she was an adult as well. I told her that although I still believed that she should “wait,” I would understand if she wanted to give me the Ring now. To my surprise, she said, “No, that’s okay. I’ll

keep it a little while longer." That September 10th, 2001, the day before she was to report to the military to Swear-In, I offered to take the Ring again. Again, she smiled and said, "No, I'll keep it." She was 18 and a half.

A few months after she completed Basic Training, my daughter came home for a visit. During that time I reminded her that the "choice" was hers; she would get no judgment from me, and that I would be happy to keep the Purity Ring safe so that she could pass it on to her own daughter, when the time came. Again, she insisted on keeping it. By this time it occurred to me that I should stop asking. The last thing I wanted was to give her mixed messages. So I forgot about it, and focused on enjoying her visit.

I'm not sure how long it was after her 19th birthday, but that summer, I think; my daughter was home for another visit. During that time she came to me, placed the necklace in my hands and said, "Here, Mom. I don't need this anymore." I remember saying with a smile, "Oh, okay, thanks. I'll put it away for you!" I didn't even realize what

had just happened! Months later, shortly before my younger daughter reported for duty, my older daughter is calling; telling me about her “escapades;” giving much more detail than any mother would want to hear about her daughter’s first experience, etc. Only *then* did I realize what she had done earlier that summer; what she was actually “telling” me at the time she placed the Ring in my hands with such ease and grace! She was following the instructions that I had given her nearly nine years earlier, and now felt mature enough to place the Ring into my hands!

Although we’d had age appropriate discussions throughout their lives (well, I guess that would depend on who you asked), my younger daughter began asking detailed questions about birth control when she was 22 or 23. Despite her inability to keep up with the Rings I gave her, based on the type of the questions she was asking, I have every reason to believe that she became sexually active around that time (22 or 23). Because of all the exposure, and misinformation about sex our children receive from early ages, it is understandable that many parents believe

there is nothing they can do to prevent their children from having sex too young. I have to admit: I believed it too! But based on my daughter's behaviors and conversations after they left home, I'm now convinced that even today's children *will listen* if you talk to them. I think the trick is talking to them often; not just once. Talk to them until they can almost quote you word for word as you start to repeat the same information for the umpteenth time!

I think it's also important to lead by example. You can talk until you turn blue; but if they see you doing something other than what you are trying to teach them, then they are more likely to do what you *do*; not what you *say*. That's true for *any* behavior you'd rather your children not mimic. I am not suggesting that as a fully-grown adult, you must remain celibate if you are single or divorced. However, if you are not celibate, then it isn't something that your children should know about. Just remember: children listen very carefully to what they see.