

Our Mission

The mission of Boundless is to build strong foundations for marriage, parenting and Christian service by providing young adults with a Biblical vision for the single years rooted in sexual purity, Christian community, and stewardship of gifts and talents.

Our Guiding Principles

Since Focus on the Family's primary reason for existence is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ through a practical outreach to homes, we have firm beliefs about both the Christian faith and the importance of the family. This ministry is therefore based upon the following six guiding philosophies.

The Preeminence of Evangelism

We believe that the ultimate purpose of life is to know and glorify God and to attain eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, beginning within our own families and then reaching out to a suffering humanity that needs to embrace His love and sacrifice.

The Permanence of Marriage

We believe that the institution of marriage is a sacred covenant designed by God to model the love of Christ for His people and to serve both the public and private good as the basic building block of human civilization. Marriage is intended by God to be a thriving, lifelong relationship between a man and a woman enduring through trials, sickness, financial crises and emotional stresses. Therefore, Christians are called to defend and protect God's marriage design and to minister in Christ's name to those who suffer the consequences of its brokenness.

The Value of Children

We believe that children are a heritage from God and a blessing from His hand. Parents are therefore accountable to Him for raising, shaping and preparing them for a life of service to His Kingdom and to humanity.

The Sanctity of Human life

We believe that human life is created by God in His image. It is of inestimable worth and significance in all its dimensions, including the unborn, the aged, the mentally disabled, those deemed unattractive, the physically challenged, and every other condition in which humanness is expressed from the single cell stage of development to natural death. Christians are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life.

The Importance of Social Responsibility

We believe that God has ordained the social institutions of family, church, and government for the benefit of mankind and as a reflection of His divine nature. Therefore, Christians are called to support these institutions, according to God's design and purpose, and to protect them against destructive social influences. Such involvement is in obedience to Christ's lordship over all creation and is required by His command to care for the well-being of all people.

The Value of Male and Female

We believe that God created humans in His image, intentionally male and female, each bringing unique and complementary qualities to sexuality and relationships. Sexuality is a glorious gift from God to be offered back to Him either in marriage for procreation, union and mutual delight or in celibacy for undivided devotion to Christ. Christians are called to proclaim the truth and beauty of God's design and the redemption of sexual brokenness in our lives and culture through Jesus Christ.

Messages

Boundless is a publication of Focus on the Family's "Family Formation" department. As such, Boundless seeks to communicate the following four primary messages to its audience. That said, we do publish articles that communicate other "messages."

Sexual Purity

Dating Guidelines

Help young men and women deal with the ups and downs of romantic love by providing Biblical guidelines for pre-marital relationships that clearly define the different roles and responsibilities of men and women, their parents, and their church.

Boundaries/Sexual Purity

Provide clear Biblical teaching for Christian singles who seemingly are always looking for that "line" asking "how far is too far?" when it comes to romantic intimacy before marriage. Also, help singles avoid daily sexual temptations such as masturbation, internet porn, and entertaining sexual fantasies.

Christian Community

Community Outreach to Singles

Many singles living far from home need familial-like support, accountability, and discipleship in the form of mentors and small groups within churches. Demonstrate how church leaders, mentors and even extended family members can reach out and also how singles can seek out such support.

Stewardship of Gifts and Talents

Stewardship of Resources and Gifts

Help young adults to be good stewards of their finances and time. Also, help them to discern how to use their gifts for future vocation and avocations. Pursue both of these stewardship efforts within the context of family formation (e.g., not spending money in a way that makes it more difficult to get married and have children).

Preparation for Marriage

Vision for Marriage

Provide young adults with a vision for the blessing and purpose of marriage. Encourage all unmarried young adults to determine if they are called to celibate service and if they are not, to be intentional about building a strong foundation for marriage.

Finding a Godly Spouse

Help young men and women navigate through the confusion and pitfalls of choosing a mate, and overcome their fears of committing to the “wrong person” by providing Biblical criteria for finding a godly spouse.

Pre-marital Preparations for Engaged Couples

Help couples build a strong foundation for marriage by openly exploring traditionally contentious issues such as expectations of family relations, finances, children and childcare, sexual intimacy, etc.

Vision for Children within Marriage

Promote the value of children as a gift of God and encourage all singles to be open to the blessing of children once they're married. Also help prepare young couples for children and adjust to the natural stresses of parenting.

Making Room for Children

Help men and especially women to make room for children once they're married when confronted with the challenges of career goals, financial needs, child care questions and fertility concerns.

Topics

Boundless articles will be categorized according to the following topics. See <http://www.boundless.org/bestof> for descriptions and examples.

- Being Single
- Career
- College
- Dating & Courtship
- Entertainment
- Faith
- Marriage & Family
- Politics
- Sex
- Time & Money
- Worldview

Characteristics/Style

A typical Boundless article might be a first-person narrative that explores an issue related to the topics/messages in the previous sections, beginning (and ending) with a personal story, speaking humbly **to** our readers rather than **about** them, and written in an engaging and fresh manner making reference to a broad spectrum of current and historical “cultural artifacts.” While there is a lot of room for variety among Boundless articles, you should consider the following as you’re writing.

- write in the first-person
- be personable, speaking conversationally with *Boundless* readers and not addressing “society”
- be a “mentor” and friend, not necessarily an “expert”
- avoid “preaching,” which can come across as condescending and irrelevant
- aim to engage our readers’ hearts, as we’re primarily in the business of affecting lives, not changing society
- use personal stories as illustrations and to spark our readers’ imaginations
Chuck Colson says it best: “[S]tories well told can communicate truth in a way that didactic ‘telling’ does not, bypassing intellectual barriers to penetrate straight to the heart. Jesus told parables; earthly stories with a heavenly point. I firmly believe the best writing does the same.”
- keep in mind that our primary readers are never-married singles up to their mid-30s who would call themselves Christians, though we do have readers outside that demographic
- avoid cynicism -- cynicism is not “cool/hip”
- consider the “take-away” of your article -- what will the reader “take away” with them after they finish reading your piece? how might they summarize what they’ve read in one or two sentences?
- “show me, don’t tell me” -- engage my senses
- use strong verbs rather than relying on adverbs and adjectives to add color to your article
- avoid clichés; instead, try to find a fresh and clever way of getting across what you want to say

- be relevant in your topic, language, references and examples
- include references to current “cultural artifacts,” society, events, philosophy, movements, beliefs, technologies, jargon
- include references to Scripture (ranging from allusions to quotations)
- include references to scholarly/classical thought (both Christian and non-Christian)
- practice discernment/sensitivity regarding making reference to potentially offensive books, movies, music, and videogames
- maintain doctrinal compatibility with FOTF and the “ancient, timeless truths” of biblical Christianity; avoid taking an absolute position on theology that is specific to one denomination and not general to all
- reflect a broad cultural/ethnic/socioeconomic sensibility; we want to affirm the breadth of God’s creation
- among other things, encourage biblical masculinity in men (to pursue, take risks, initiate, take responsibility, sacrifice) and biblical femininity in women (to prepare, nurture, embolden, “marry well”)
- instill “counter-cultural courage”
- if you are having a hard time writing on a particular subject, consider narrowing your focus; it may be better, metaphorically speaking, to write about a specific brick than to write about the entire building

Format

Boundless articles should be delivered according to the follow specifications.

- Word document
- articles should be about 1200 words, though they can be a few hundred words longer if necessary; from time to time we publish articles as long as 2,000 words
- become familiar with Word's "track changes" feature -- that's how we manage the editing process with you
- follow Associated Press (AP) style
- left-justify text, single space between sentences, double space between paragraphs, include a space before and after dashes and ellipses, list the translation of the Bible for scripture references on the first occasion (we prefer ESV and NIV)

The need for a Family Formation Ministry

Steve Watters, director of Young Adults for Focus on the Family, explored the need for a family formation ministry in the following document.

Much of our ministry has been built on Dr. Dobson's counter-cultural esteem of the sacrifices and commitments men and women make in marriage and parenting.

The following excerpt from the recent *State of Our Unions* essay "Life Without Children" demonstrates how important it is for our ministry to share affirmation for family BEFORE men and women marry and start families:

We are in the midst of a profound change in American life. Demographically, socially and culturally, the nation is shifting from a society of child-rearing families to a society of child-free adults. The percentage of households with children has declined from half of all households in 1960 to less than one-third today — the lowest percentage in the nation's history. Indeed, if the twentieth century aspired to become the "century of the child," the twenty-first may well become the century of the child-free.

We were encouraged by the ministry's recent clarifying statement on having children and believe it gives us the means to speak more boldly to those who are on the fence in their consideration of starting a family.

The other area in which the family formation team hopes to be bold is in the area of getting married. Earlier this year, *Boundless* reprinted an essay by Dr. Leon Kass in which he says:

To make naturally polygamous men accept the conventional institution of monogamous marriage has been the work of centuries of Western civilization, with social sanctions, backed by religious teachings and authority, as major instruments of the transformation, and with female modesty as the crucial civilizing device. As these mores and sanctions disappear, courtship gives way to seduction and possession, and men become again the sexually, familially, and civically irresponsible creatures they are naturally always in danger of being.

It's been our goal to hold up a vision for getting married in the midst of a hurt, skeptical and promiscuous culture, but Kass's commentary shows how difficult that task can be when our mores and sanctions disappear. We've noticed that the institutions of family and church that once were the only counter to negative trends in the popular culture are often silent — or even negative when it comes to encouraging and guiding the development of strong marriages.

We believe many families and churches who are waning in their esteem of marriage are motivated mostly by compassion — for women who haven't received good offers of marriage, for men and women who have been hurt by divorce and even for a small number who have been called to celibate service.

It's our concern, however, that many parents and churches have allowed an anti-family culture to compromise their views on young people getting married. In another passage, Dr. Kass points out that some parents are not holding up marriage because they are reluctant to rush their children into adulthood:

Youth, not adulthood, is the cultural ideal, at least as celebrated in the popular culture. Yes, everyone feels themselves to be always growing, as a result of this failed relationship or that change of job. But very few aspire to be fully grown-up, and the culture does not demand it of them, not least because many prominent grown-ups would gladly change places with today's 20-somethings. Why should a young man be eager to take his father's place, if he sees his father running away from it with all deliberate speed?

Numerous other cultural trends, such as individualism, postmodernism, soul-matism, consumerism, careerism, egalitarianism and libertarian hedonism have crept into churches and families in a way that dulls their esteem for marriage.

As a result, parents often encourage their children to take their time when it comes to getting married and churches often spend more time talking about the gift of singleness than they do talking about Biblical vision and preparation for getting married. We hear of many singles being told that marriage isn't all it's cracked up to be, only God can complete them and they should just work on being content in their singleness.

Without a compelling vision or support for getting married any time soon, today's young men and women are increasingly experiencing:

- **Relational hurt and confusion** — with little motivation to make timely decisions about getting married, many couples get in a holding pattern of enjoying many of the benefits of marriage, causing their relationships to drag out longer and to make their breakups feel like mini-divorces.
- **Marital delay** — the average age of first marriage has increased by five years over the last generation (a study by Norval Glenn showed that while couples who delayed marriage until 22 were more satisfied with their marriage than those who married earlier, there was also a marked drop in satisfaction among those who waited to marry until after 27 — often because of increased sexual baggage and difficulty shifting from independent to interdependent lives)
- **Sexual promiscuity** — a recent CDC study showed that 77% of men surveyed who were raised Fundamentalist Protestant had sex before marriage — the book *Real Sex* implies that Christian women aren't far behind.
- **Serial sexual relationships** — the CDC study showed that 60% of women lose their virginity 5 years or more before they get married and that 60% of non-married men have more than one sexual partner before marriage (with the largest segment of responders having between 6 and 9 partners).
- **Cohabitation** — 25% of Christians now live together before they marry
- **Divorce** — between 85 and 90% of the general population ends up getting married over their lifetimes but after taking the paths described in the bullets above, fewer couples are arriving with a strong foundation for marriage and parenting — leading many to divorce within the crucial first five years.

Our hope is to respond to these realities with a message to singles that focuses on:

- Fear of God, repentance/restoration and renewed trust in His ability to accomplish His purposes
- Purity (fleeing temptation and pursuing absolute purity with no release valves)
- Stewardship of calling and resources (demonstrating dominion and cultivation for God's purpose)
- Christian community (family-based, intergenerational teaching and support)
- Vision and preparation for marriage or celibacy as honorable and high callings

To do this, we are working to develop up-to-date positions and language regarding the following issues among the growing population of never married young adults:

- Appropriate Biblical affirmation for singles within the body of Christ
- The call to Christian manhood and womanhood — reflecting growing spiritual maturity and accountability before God for gifts and resources
- The call to absolute sexual purity outside of marriage
- Context for the “gift of singleness” spoken of in 1 Corinthians 7 and Matthew 9:12
- The downside of intentional, extended delay and the need for timely discernment of marriage prospects
- Esteem of marriage as honorable, created by God and designed as a reflection of Christ's relationship with the church
- Hope and healing for those who have been hurt by divorce and sexual sin
- Emphasis on the need for men to take initiative in “leaving and cleaving” and “finding a wife” and a woman's need to be Biblically discerning in evaluating marriage proposals
- The need for churches and families to provide young men and women with an atmosphere of support, protection and accountability in their steps toward marriage.