

Oh, let me warn you, sisters in Jerusalem:
Don't excite love, don't stir it up, until the
time is ripe—and you're ready.

Song of Solomon 8:4

(The Message)



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Worth the Wait: God's Design for Sexual Fulfillment



Usually when you hear mention of a banana in reference to sex education, you immediately think of condoms. But I would like to suggest that the banana is able to teach us about our sexuality from a divine perspective.

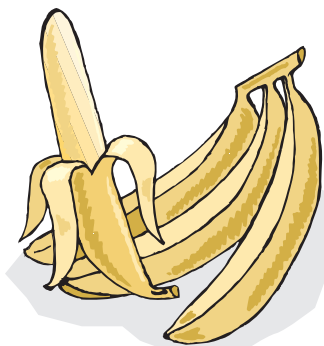
Most people, if given an option, would prefer eating a delicious, yellow, peeled banana rather than one that is green and not yet ripe. The reason for waiting to peel and eat a banana until it is yellow is because bananas were designed to be eaten when they are ripe. There is nothing poisonous about a green banana, nothing wrong with it—except that it is not ripe and therefore not at its best for taste and texture. The banana peel has been put on the banana to preserve it until it is ripe. Once you peel a green banana, it no longer ripens—it rots. A green banana left in its peel however, will ripen to become the delicious fruit it was designed to be.

In the Song of Solomon, there is a phrase that is repeated three times: “Do not awaken love until it’s time.” In other words, don’t peel the banana until it is ripe. God has given us clear instructions about the physical expression of our sexuality. He says to not be in a sexual relationship with someone until it is time . . . until you are married. As with the banana, the reason God has put a “protective peel” around sex is not because there is anything wrong with sex—He invented it. Nor because He doesn’t like it—He created us physiologically to enjoy it. He put the “protective peel” around our sexual expression because He wants us to enjoy sex at its best. He has put the peel on not to *keep* us from pleasure but to *increase* our pleasure within the marriage relationship.

Many Christian parents have given little advice to their teens regarding sexual expression other than “Don’t get pregnant” or “Make sure you don’t have sex until you are married.” In other words, many parents are simply saying, “Don’t peel the banana before you are married.” But sex is much more than sexual intercourse. Sex begins with anything that is sexually stimulating. I will never forget the couple that came in for premarital counseling and promptly and proudly announced that they were not going to have sex until they were married. I said, “That’s wonderful! How involved have you been with each other sexually?” At this point, they both looked down at the floor, as if the answer to the question were written there. When they didn’t respond, I asked

them if they had been involved in fondling each other. “Yes,” they admitted. Have you been naked together? “Yes.” Before we finished, they had acknowledged that they had done everything with each other except actual intercourse. Back to the banana: this couple had acted on the basis that the only goal was to get to the wedding with the banana peel intact. But every time they got involved in sexually stimulating each other—which is called “foreplay” and is given by God as a way to sexually excite couples to prepare them for intercourse—they were, in essence, squeezing the banana. They had squeezed the banana so much that on their wedding day, when the peel finally came off, the banana was pretty much mush . . . not exactly how God has intended bananas to be eaten. And, for many people who squeeze the banana too much, the peel eventually breaks! Of course, they never *intended* for it to break, but it did—because bananas were designed to be peeled and eaten, not played with as a recreational sport.

Many people do peel bananas prematurely, when they’re green. Some think that peeling it early will merely hasten its ripening.



Others simply want the banana so badly they won’t wait. For various reasons, they peel the banana too soon and discover that it doesn’t ripen, it rots.

Those who have engaged in sexual activity prior to marriage may feel a bit hopeless at this time. But do not let hopelessness be your emotion. If you are a child of God and have asked Him to forgive your sin, He is faithful to cleanse us from our sin (1 John 1:9). When we have a rotten banana in our house, we don’t throw it away—we make delicious banana bread. This is how the grace of God works. God is able to take our mistakes and sins and make them into something that is beautiful. It was not His original design for the banana, but in his kindness he redeems it. For those of you who have “peeled” the banana prematurely, God is able to forgive you and to make something beautiful from your life.

For those of you who have not prematurely “peeled the banana,” remember: bananas ripen in God’s time. You will never regret your decision to wait until the banana is ripe. You have only one chance to eat the banana the way God designed. May He give you the discipline to watch love ripen, and the delight of enjoying its fruit.

—Paul Friesen