

Girls of Grace promotes teen modesty, chastity

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By Greg Garrison

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (RNS)—Teenage girls—and their mothers—tend to get excited about Point of Grace, a fixture on America's Christian music scene for 15 years.

The four female singers hope to translate that excitement over their music into lessons about chastity and modesty. Across the country, they lead two-day Girls of Grace conferences. They blend concerts with a workshop for teen girls that tackles issues such as premarital sex and being fashionable without showing too much skin.

The conferences feature tips on cosmetics, fashion and shopping. The group brings along other music leaders, including Rebecca St. James, and speakers, including a cosmetics expert.



Point of
Grace
members
include,
from left to
right,
Heather
Payne,
Leigh
Cappellino,
Shelley
Breen and
Denise
Jones. The
foursome
sponsor
Girls of
Grace
conferences
to teach
chastity and
modesty.
(Photo
courtesy of
Word
Records)

“We've always wanted to do something for teenage girls,” said Heather Payne, who co-founded Point of Grace 15 years ago with childhood friends Denise Jones and Terry Jones, and another singer, Shelley Breen, whom they met at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark.

The foursome began singing at churches in the early 1990s, and then won the grand prize at a competition for Christian groups in Estes Park, Colo.

They signed with Word Records in 1992 and were named new artist of the year by the Gospel Music Association in the 1994 Dove Awards.

Leigh Cappellinno, wife of their long-time guitar player, joined the group in 2003 after Terry Jones retired in 2002 to stay home with her three children.

“We want girls to show they are a Christian in the way they act and the way they dress,” Payne said. “There's so much pulling at them from the world. They think they need to have so much money, clothes and possessions. We have a lot of teenagers who suffer from depression because they realize they don't have all that.”

The format features a lot of music interspersed with heart-to-heart talks and beauty tips.

“We do a concert, and we talk to girls about things in their own lives that we deal with,” Payne said. “We try to be vulnerable and talk about things we struggle with.”

They show how Christian girls can look pretty without appearing slutty.

“We show how jeans can look cute without being low-slung,” Payne said. “You have to be picky.

“We want to teach kids to dress in a classy but not trashy way. We have a fashion show with a makeover. It's such a fun time.”

Girls can go wrong by following the crowd on fashion choices such as prom dresses, Payne said.

“We've chosen prom dresses to show them how they can look good but not bare their entire body,” she said. “There's no reason to show your belly.”

Point of Grace also promotes chastity.

“I used to give my testimony that I was a virgin, and I was going to save myself for my husband,” Payne said. “It worked for me, and it would work for everybody. It's God's way.”

As for boyfriends: “It's hard to get it through to a girl that it's not the most important thing,” Payne said.

“I was 29 before I got married. There was never the right guy. I wondered if I would ever find him. When I put all that worry into my relationship with the Lord, my attitude and perspective changed. You will have relationships; some of them will last, some will not. The main thing you should look for in a boy is if he loves God with his whole heart. Our bodies are a temple, and we're not supposed to have sex before we get married.”

The singers also talk about body image.

“All of us struggle with our self-image,” Payne said. “Sometimes I don't like to look in the mirror. I have told myself that I hated myself. I have a 3-year-old girl. I would be devastated if I ever heard her say that about herself. God created us to be his image-bearers.”

Payne hopes mothers will bring their daughters and their daughters' friends to their conferences.

“We like the ratio to be more girls than moms,” Payne said. And no boys are allowed, she said. “Strictly girls.”

Greg Garrison writes for *The Birmingham News* in Birmingham, Ala.