



# **THE CATHOLIC SINGLE'S GUIDE TO SEX**

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## INTRODUCTION

Sex. Ugh.

If you are trying to be a good Catholic and striving to live a chaste life, everyone and everything is working against you.

Any of these sound familiar?

*It's not a big deal, it's just sex!*

*Stop making it into a thing, and just hook up with someone.*

*Oh, you're Catholic, so you must have weird repression issues.*

*Is this your Catholic guilt talking?*

*You just got out of a bad breakup? Just have sex with a bunch of people to get over it.*

*Are you guys compatible in bed? 'Cause it's going to cause a lot of problems if you don't figure it out now.*

Let's face it, even if everyone isn't having sex all the time, it still seems like they are (especially when you are most definitely NOT).

What's a single Catholic to do? Why do we believe what we believe?  
How is it even possible to live chastely today?

Well, we're here for you. Our best twelve articles on sex are compiled into this crisp little book. Sixty plus pages of insight into the world of navigating sex and sexual desire as a practicing Catholic. Read on.

—The CatholicMatch Institute Team

## Chapter 1: The Language of Sex

by Mary Beth Bonacci

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*“Purity prepares the soul for love and love confirms the soul in purity.”*

*—John Henry Cardinal Newman*

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God created sex to speak a very specific language—the language of self donation, of “I give myself to you forever.”

*“To give your body to another person symbolizes the total gift of yourself to that person.” ~ St. John Paul II*

Sex speaks the language of marriage.

Part of that language, and the subject I'd like to pick up today, is found in the way God designed our hormones. During sexual activity, the brain releases large amounts of a powerful hormone called oxytocin.

### **Superglue of the heart**

I've known about oxytocin for years, and I've spent a fair amount of time researching its effects. I knew that it causes forgetfulness and a decreased ability to think rationally, and that it causes a strong emotional attachment to form between the two people involved. Oxytocin has been called the "superglue of the heart."

What I didn't know, and I just recently discovered, is that oxytocin also causes a person to experience strong feelings of trust in his or her partner. Trust. It doesn't matter if the person involved is actually trustworthy, or whether or not they have done anything to earn that trust. The feelings just show up.

Is it just me, or does anyone else see how all of this could be problematic in dating?

The general purpose of dating, as I understand it, is supposed to be to figure out a) if you want to get married, and b) if so, to whom. Basically, it's interviewing for the job of spouse. Since that's a pretty important decision, it seems to me that one would need, above all, to have a clear

mind throughout the process. You need to see the other person honestly and objectively—as he or she really is.

*Sex speaks the language of marriage.*

### **Sex in a dating relationship**

Sex in a dating relationship is going to seriously compromise that process. Sexual activity, as we saw above, causes people to be forgetful, decreases their ability to think rationally, and forms a bond and feelings of trust between them. How objective will they be after all of that?

Have you ever looked at a couple and thought “Why does she stay with him when he treats her so badly?” Or “Why does he trust her when she’s so obviously playing him?” Or, worse yet, have you ever seen one of those 20/20 shows where they profile the wealthy woman who was scammed by the charming con man?

That’s oxytocin at work.

### **The breakup ...**

The breakup of a sexual relationship can be devastatingly painful. God intended this bond to be permanent, to speak the language of “I give myself to you, forever.” It binds two people whom He has joined together ‘til death do they part. It was never intended for temporary or conditional relationships. And when those relationships end, it’s the emotional equivalent of divorce. The superglue of the heart tears apart, and it’s never a clean tear. Pieces of her heart stay with him, and

vice versa. And, over time, all of this bonding and breaking creates a certain level of emotional “scar tissue” that makes it more difficult for couples to bond within marriage.

This doesn't just affect teenagers. It applies to all of us. When somebody comes to me, crying, after I've given a talk on chastity, it's always about this. There is enormous pain out there—not only among singles of all ages, but also among the married who are still struggling with their pre-marital experiences. I suspect there is more than a little experience with this—and more than a little pain—across the the single Catholic community. I will tell you what I tell the others—that there is always hope and healing in Christ.

### **Why the Church's teaching makes sense to me**

One of the main reasons I fell in love with the Church's message on chastity all those years ago was the freedom that it offered. Freedom to live our dating lives without this kind of pain. Freedom to determine what God is calling us to in life, and freedom to respond. Freedom to get out of relationships that aren't working out, and freedom to find the right one—no matter how long that might take.

And the more I learn, the truer that is. God's way is the best way.

## Chapter 2: How to Date Without Sex

by James Blankenship

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*“Only the chaste man and the chaste woman are capable of true love.”*

*—Pope John Paul II*

Before I was married, I would have answered the question “How important is sex in marriage?” with an affirmative answer: Sex in marriage is very important.

But what if we all got it wrong, and there is way more to marriage than sex?

I'm quickly approaching my one year wedding anniversary, and I can honestly say that my preconceived, pre-marriage views about sex were totally off.

Yes, sex has its place, particularly because God told us to "be fruitful and multiply." But the sexual act is just one expression of one of the Love Languages. In marriage, there are so many other essential ways of expressing one's love for his or her spouse that aren't physical.

### **What is marriage about if not sex?**

Pope St. John Paul II says that marriage is a *communio personarum*, a communion of persons. What does this mean? The communion of persons in marriage is the bond that makes the couple one in heart, mind, and body.

The couple is of **one heart**, meaning they love each other to the exclusion of other people and things. The couple is of **one mind**, which means that they have the same goal in life, i.e. eternal salvation. And finally the couple is of **one body**, which means they care for each other's physical needs with as much attention as they care for their own.

All of this stuff about marriage sounds really great for the married couple (and it is!).

*The communion of persons in marriage is the bond that makes the couple one in heart, mind, and body.*

**But you are still in a dating relationship and not married yet.**

What are you to do? How do you begin to live out this communion of persons that St. John Paul II describes?

### **1. Foster a oneness of heart**

First, you must foster that oneness of heart by beginning that process of focusing your attention on your significant other. I work at a parish for my day job, and I have seen several families break up during this academic year because one or both spouses turn their focus to other things and people. Here are some practical suggestions based off of real life struggles:

- Keep your job in check by checking it at the door of your home. Do work at work, and when you are with your boyfriend or girlfriend, be present.
- Don't foster close relationships with people of the opposite sex who you are not dating.
- Start praying together. The closer you draw to Christ, together, the closer you draw to each other.

### **2. Foster a oneness of mind**

The great philosopher Aristotle teaches that the best and closest relationship/friendship is among equals. I can't imagine being married to a woman who can't challenge me intellectually. I also can't imagine

being married to a woman who disagrees with me on the important things in life.

Here are some practical suggestions to help you foster a oneness of mind with your boyfriend/girlfriend:

- Read a book together, aloud.
- Watch the news, and discuss the politics of the day.
- Take a class together. Any class will do: a cooking class, a pottery class, an exercise class. By learning something new, you foster the friendship that Aristotle speaks of.

### **3. Foster a oneness of body**

A oneness of body is most perfectly achieved in marriage during the marital act. But that kind of oneness is reserved for marriage and marriage alone. How do you foster a oneness of body while dating?

- Spend time together physically, and don't just communicate via text message or social media. If you met online, don't let the relationship stay online and consist of messages and smiley faces. Go out for a cup of coffee or a walk in a park. Technology is just a tool, and can never replace being in the same room as the person you are dating.
- Go to the gym or exercise together. One of my past girlfriends loved to exercise, and I love to hike. We spent hours upon hours, weekend after weekend, hiking and being out in God's creation.

- Do acts of service for your boyfriend or girlfriend. Marriage is all about serving the other so it's good to practice this before you get married. Ladies, bake some cookies for your boyfriend (because everyone knows that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach.) Gentlemen, buy your girlfriend some flowers or handwrite a love letter to her.

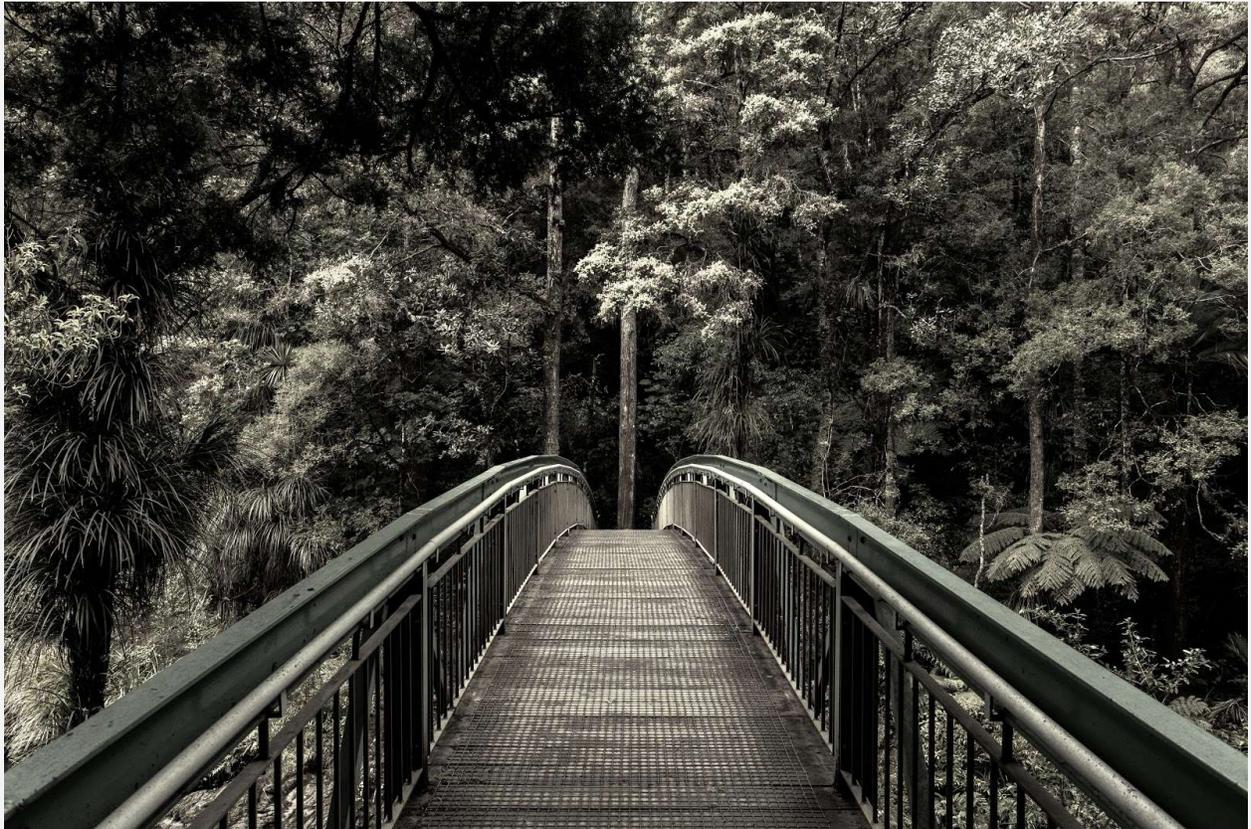
Concupiscence, or our unruly desires due to original sin, make us desire physical pleasures, and sex is a strong physical pleasure.

But the grace of marriage calms our unruly desires and puts sex in its proper place. Sacramental marriage is a beautiful state in life that provides so much joy and peace to the soul in many ways. Look forward to marriage, not just for sex, but also for a oneness of heart, mind, and body with your beloved.

## Chapter 3: How Far is too Far?

by Mary Beth Bonacci

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*“Holy Purity, the queen of virtues, the angelic virtue, is a jewel so precious that those who possess it become like the angels of God in heaven, even though clothed in mortal flesh.”*

*– St. John Bosco*

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When I was a teenager, I knew I wasn't supposed to have sex. I wasn't exactly clear on exactly why I wasn't supposed to have sex, but I was

pretty sure it had something to do with not getting pregnant and not going to hell. And that was enough for me.

What I wasn't clear on—and what was, to me, the holy grail of questions—was “how far can I go?” Was it only actual sex I was supposed to be avoiding? Or all the stuff that led up to it? Exactly which stuff that led up to it was I supposed to avoid? It was all very confusing.

I wanted information that was specific. I wanted the Church to publish a list of exactly what I could and couldn't do on a date. Because if it was a mortal sin, I didn't want to do it. But if it was a venial sin, I didn't want to miss it.

Okay, not exactly. But that was not too far from my mentality at the time. I just wanted to know where that big mortal sin line was drawn.

Unfortunately, the Church has no such list. So not only are good Catholic teenagers left to sort it all out for themselves, but so are we hapless Catholic single adults, trying to navigate the grown-up dating world. Is it different for us? Are we allowed to do more? Should we do less? Why are we still having to figure this out after all of these years of dating?

*If it was a mortal sin, I didn't want to do it. But if it was a venial sin, I didn't want to miss it.*

## Playing near the edge

I have written ad nauseum on these pages about how sex speaks the language of self-donation. The thing is, that language isn't just spoken in the final act. It's spoken in the entire act—all of that stuff that happens before the final act, stuff that if the final act happens is called “foreplay.” So, being part of the act, it carries the same meaning.

Remember how I wrote a column about bonding in sexual activity? The hormone oxytocin is secreted in the brain during sexual arousal. Oxytocin, as you will recall, is the bonding hormone. It causes forgetfulness, decreased ability to think rationally, and strong feelings of connection and trust to the other person.

That doesn't just happen when we “go all the way.” It happens with all of the stuff that happens along the way, too.

The one thing I knew when I was a teenager was that private body parts were off limits. So I'm going to assume that's a given here, as well. It doesn't take a genius to see that kind of activity is very clearly “sexual” activity.

Here's what I see generally happening to “nice” Catholic couples. They figure the “body parts” line is the one they shouldn't cross, and they figure since they're nice and holy and all, they'll just be strong and not cross it. So they make out on the sofa for hours and hours on a regular basis, failing to recognize that the human body is programmed to want to move forward sexually. And they either a) cross the line, or b) don't technically cross the line, but still feel vaguely guilty and can't explain

why. The more important God is in their lives, the more likely this is to happen. And it messes up their relationships. The oxytocin starts pumping, fueling a level of attachment that is not natural for the stage of their relationship. At the same time, they are feeling guilty and uneasy before God. They frequently tend to blame each other, and that blame can easily become full-blown resentment.

### **Sexual attraction is good**

Being sexually attracted to someone we're dating, someone we care about, is a good thing. It's how God wired us. But deliberately feeding that attraction outside of marriage—"making out" just because it feels good—is problematic. It takes us into the realm of using the other person's body as simply means to our own sexual pleasure. And that's a violation of the personalistic norm. "The only adequate response to a human person is love."

*Being sexually attracted to someone we're dating, someone we care about, is a good thing. It's how God wired us.*

The problem, of course, is that the attraction is going to be present when those two people are together, and particularly when they are being affectionate with each other. Does that make any affection between them bad? Should they abstain from all affection? Where exactly is the line?

Well, read on.

## Chapter 4: On Chastity: How To Just Do It

by James Blankenship

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*“Don’t say, ‘That’s the way I am-it’s my character.’ It’s your lack of character. Esto vir!-Be a man!”*

*– St. Josemaria Escriva*

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It was a beautiful sunny day and everything was going according to plan. Our date started out by visiting a church to say a quick prayer before we explored a new hiking trail. On our hike we beheld a couple of stunningly beautiful Blue Ridge Mountain vistas that were painted

with the colors of fall. We saw deer prancing through the woods and hawks floating on the breeze. We breathed in nothing but the refreshing and crisp mountain air. I was intoxicated on the joy of life because I was a man in love!

That day, I was in love the girl I was dating and I was enamored by the goodness of the Lord. Love, by its very nature, instills in us a desire to be united with our beloved. That day on the mountain top, I wanted nothing more than to be united with both my Lord and my girlfriend. Naturally we started kissing, then we continued kissing, then we kissed some more until somehow by the grace of God, one of us pulled away and said, "We need to be careful that we don't get too passionate. We aren't married yet."

### **What the mountain taught me**

That experience on the mountain stirred many questions in my mind and I began to ponder what it means to date chastely. Unfortunately, that relationship ended soon after my mountain epiphany, but the questions remained with me. I turned to Google and I came up with a really good article from the CatholicMatch Institute of all places. The author gives a great list of situations that you don't want to find yourself in:

"Drinking too much at parties, on dates, or during events out; talking too long and too late in the car; talking too long and too late anywhere; sleepovers; laying down together; kissing laying down; kissing sitting down; maybe even

kissing standing up; not to mention kissing with any portion of your clothing removed. And backrubs. Definitely backrubs.”

I am immediately reminded of the verse in scripture that talks about a clean house, i.e. our souls.

“When an unclean spirit goes out of someone, it roams through arid regions searching for rest but, finding none, it says, ‘I shall return to my home from which I came.’ But upon returning, it finds it swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and brings back seven other spirits more wicked than itself who move in and dwell there, and the last condition of that person is worse than the first.” (Luke 11:24-26)

If I properly order my dating relationship and don't engage in all that things I shouldn't be, am I not leaving myself open to greater temptations and attacks from the devil? And like a typical guy, I feel like I must fill that void and do something.

My questions persisted, what is chastity and how is it practiced in a dating relationship? Chastity is a virtue and like all virtues, it gives us the power (virtue comes from the Latin word for power) to do something, to act in a certain way. I want to offer to you my own list of dating DO's to compliment the many very helpful lists of DONT's. If you have helpful hints to practicing chastity in a dating relationship, please share in the comment section below.

## Do You Pray?

Prayer is the first step for everything. I ask myself the this important question every day, “did I pray enough today?” Prayer is conversation with the Lord. It is our lifeline to Life itself. When you pray and focus your attention on the Lord, you just see things differently. I pray to see Christ in everyone I meet throughout the day.

*Prayer is the first step for everything.*

I pray now particularly that I may see the image of Christ in my fiancée. By seeing the Lord in my fiancée, I try to positively avoid things that will destroy that image, i.e. Sin. I don't want to touch her inappropriately or kiss her too passionately. If I start to go down the path of the DON'T lists, I do a quick three Hail Mary's, and I can once again DO.

## Do You Communicate?

Communication is key. We first have that conversation with the Lord. Then we need to examine if we communicate well with our significant other. Are you open and honest enough to tell him or her that you are aroused by passionate kissing? Do you tell him or her what turns you on so that those types of touches can be avoided?

By talking with each other, you will begin to know where the line is for each of you. One thing I've discovered recently is that line changes. What might be an ok way to show affection one minute is entirely

wrong the next minute. This discovery, however, would have remained hidden had we not communicated.

### **Do You Know Each Other's Love Language?**

Love languages? We all express our love for another in one of five ways or "languages." Do you know how your significant other gives and receives love? My primary love language is physical touch. My fiancée knows that I need that gentle hand on the arm or the pat on the back to know that I am loved. She also knows that she shouldn't touch me in certain ways. She also knows that when she can't touch me, she can use Words of Affirmation, my secondary love language, to fill the void.

The love languages are important in avoiding sin, but also in knowing how to express your love to your significant other in a chaste way. Chastity is a virtue that helps you to act in a certain grace-filled way. It is a virtue to help you see the Divine in all things

*The love languages are important in avoiding sin, but also knowing how to express your love to your significant other in a chaste way.*

Chastity will help you live a certain way so that the words of the Gospel apply directly to you and your life, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). Do the do's, avoid the don'ts, so that when you say "I Do" to your spouse it will be with a pure heart.

## Chapter 5: Men Are Blowtorches, Women are Ovens

by Mary Beth Bonacci

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*“Lust indulged became habit, and habit unresisted became necessity.”*  
– St. Augustine

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Recently I came upon a conversation online about kissing on the first date, in which my name was mentioned. Actually, what was mentioned was a quote from my book *Real Love* which, while not about kissing on the first date, was about kissing in general.

I said, among other things, that it speaks the language of affection. I didn't specify the exact point in a relationship where that can or should come into play, which apparently left me endorsing the First Date Kiss by default.

What fascinated me was what followed, which was the statement (paraphrased) that if there's no kiss after the first date, there's no romantic attraction and hence there should be no second date.

I have no intention of proclaiming publicly on the morality or lack thereof of kissing on the first date. That's a complex subject and would be another—probably much longer—article. But I would like to offer some insight into the difference between women and men, a difference that could shed a lot of light on this no-kiss-means-no-future mentality.

### **Men are from Mars**

John Gray, who is morally and theologically a bit of a dunce but very astute at male/female differences, says that “men are like blowtorches and women are like ovens.” In other words, men are inclined to heat up quickly (and often cool down just as quickly), whereas women tend to take longer to develop attraction, which then tends to be more grounded and last longer.

To be more specific, he says that attraction develops in women in a different order than it does in men. Men, according to Gray, feel physical attraction first. As he gets to know the various women to whom he is physically attracted, he finds that he likes some better

than others. “If things keep going well, he may reach the stage of mental attraction (attraction to her character, virtues, strength, kindness, etc) and then ‘soul attraction’ and fall in love with her.”

Women are inclined to go about it in more or less the opposite way. Gray says the women’s first level of attraction tends to be mental. In other words, she finds him interesting for some reason. In getting to know him, she’ll then move to emotional attraction. And it’s then—when she feels attraction on both of those levels—that she will be likely to become physically attracted to him.

### **Inside attraction**

As I woman, I have to say that Dr. Gray’s theories make sense to me. It isn’t that women don’t notice attractive men or don’t realize they’re attractive. But there’s a difference between noticing that someone is attractive and being attracted to him. For me, a man I know nothing about but who happens to be attractive is like a beautiful painting—certainly a great work of art, but not necessarily something that I want to take home. Physical attractiveness says nothing about the person, and—to me, at least—it doesn’t in itself lend itself to desiring any level of intimacy with him.

Kissing is a very intimate thing to do. Many women, to feel truly attracted to a man, to actually want to be close and to do something as intimate as kissing him, generally want to feel a certain intimacy with him on the other levels as well.

That's not to say that our emotional and mental "detectors" are infallible. Some women are attracted to "personalities" that are essentially dysfunctional—often in a way that mirrors their own dysfunction or woundedness. Gray says that if a woman meets a man and immediately feels attraction on all four levels, that's a certain sign that she's attracted to a fantasy of the man and not the man himself. In fact, he goes so far as to say that if a woman who has a history of making bad choices is suddenly very physically attracted to a man she doesn't know, she should run the other way.

At any rate, women are not men. (And we're very thankful for that, all the way around.) We generally need to go through some other stages of attraction before landing at the "wanting to kiss you" stage. Can all of that happen on a first date?

Sure, I suppose it could.

But is it guaranteed to happen?

Not at all.

A woman can sometimes take weeks or months getting to know a man before she realizes her attraction to him. This is the beauty of a "friends first" relationship (of which a few men on the forums also didn't appreciate the subtle benefits).

There is no right and wrong in the difference between men and women in the way we become attracted. We're just different. And we need to understand that.

Men tend to assume that a woman who isn't instantly physically attracted to them isn't interested. And women tend to assume that a man who is physically attracted to them must be attracted to their intellects and their souls, when in fact he's just at that first, less discriminating level.

And that can lead to a lot of misunderstandings, a lot of hurt and a lot of missed opportunities.

## Chapter 6: Why Women Should Set The Pace With Physical Affection

by Mary Beth Bonacci

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*“To be pure, to remain pure, can only come at a price, the price of knowing God and loving him enough to do his will. He will always give us the strength we need to keep purity as something as beautiful for him.”*

*– Mother Teresa*

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To summarize our discussion from the last chapter, we concluded that for men, physical attraction tends to come first, followed by mental and emotional attraction. For women, on the other hand, real physical attraction (as opposed to the “appreciating good looks the way we appreciate a beautiful painting” type of attraction) tends to come later, after we’ve gotten to know him a little better and find him mentally and emotionally attractive as well.

In other words, we’re less inclined to want to be physically intimate with someone until we’ve experienced some emotional attraction and intimacy.

I closed by saying that difference can cause a lot of misunderstandings, hurt and missed opportunities—an understatement, if I’ve ever uttered one.

I’ve been thinking ever since (well, in between thinking about work, family and the new car I need) about this particular little trick that God has apparently played on us. Dating-wise, the ramifications are staggering.

### **20 questions**

There is so much to figure out in the early stages of dating. “Do I like him?” “Does she like me?” “Do I like him more than he likes me?” “Is this something worth pursuing?” “Can I afford to get my hopes up?”

Since there frequently isn’t a high level of conversational intimacy yet, most of that type of communication happens via non-verbal cues.

How does he act? How does she respond? How interested does he seem? What kind of affection is happening?

Of course, it should go without saying (at least when you're hearing from me) the primary consideration is that any physical affection be chaste, that it be a real expression of genuine affection and not a mere using of the other's body for pleasure and that it not be at a level that makes it more difficult for either party to maintain that chastity.

Still, chaste affection is fueled to a certain extent by the physical attraction that God gave us, and since he gave it to us in different ways, we need to understand and respect those ways.

### **New wisdom in old tradition**

I got to thinking about the time-honored (i.e. "old") tradition that says "the woman sets the pace" of physical affection in a relationship. It's easy to dismiss old practices like this as just vestiges of the old double standard, where women's and men's purity (or lack thereof) was viewed through very different lenses.

But I'm starting to see a whole new level of wisdom here.

Women are less likely than men to experience physical attraction before emotional attraction. In other words, when they start to desire some level of physical intimacy with someone, it's generally because they are also interested in them on an emotional and intellectual level.

*Women are less likely than men to experience physical attraction before emotional attraction.*

That's the way it is in our world. And so, we assume that's the way it is in everyone's world. In other words, we assume that if a guy is physically attracted enough to kiss us, it means he's attracted to us, our wonderful traits and unique individual-ness. And so, if we are also physically attracted enough to want to kiss him, we assume that both have gone through the intellectual and emotional levels to get to this point, and this relationship is on track to move forward.

Whereas for a guy, he may just be acting on that first level. He hasn't made any decisions about the mental or emotional. He's just physically attracted and enjoying the moment and has no clue that she's reading anything deeper into it.

### **Women's wounds**

A lot of women get hurt this way, giving their hearts to "relationships" that never really were.

So yeah, women need to set the pace for several reasons.

First, we shouldn't feel pressured to express any kind of affection before we sincerely mean it.

Second and more importantly, we protect ourselves and our hearts when we make sure everybody's on the same page. If we want physical affection to mean something more than just an expression of physical

attraction (and everything in our hearts and souls is wired to want just that), we need to make sure that his kisses mean something as well. To do that, we need to wait for signs that the relationship is based on more than a passing infatuation. We need to see intellectual and emotional attraction, not just physical. And, of course, we need to see evidence of respect.

And to reiterate the most important point once again, we're talking about chaste affection. Nothing I'm saying here should be interpreted to mean anything else. It's too big a topic to get into here, but if you want to know more, read—well, just about anything I've ever written. My book *Real Love* is a good place to start.

## Chapter 7: Do You Just Want Me For My Body?

*by Mary Beth Bonacci*

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*“[God] has assigned as a duty to every man the dignity  
of every woman.”  
– Pope John Paul II*

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*Childlessness is the “elephant in the room” of the singles’ world.*

*We fear it, we struggle with it, but we don’t talk about it.*

*So I’m going to talk about it some more.*

## **Older man seeking younger woman**

Actually, I want to expand on something that I mentioned in passing last time. That would be the issue of older men—on this site and elsewhere—who are seeking much younger women, with no openness at all to the possibility of meeting and marrying someone their own age.

The connection to childlessness is obvious. Women have to face the issue head-on at a certain age. Men can remain in denial for a really, really long time.

Let me say from the outset that I realize we are talking about a very small minority here. I hope I’ve made it clear by this time that I am a big fan of men. And the vast, vast majority of single men I’ve known are looking for women reasonably near their own age. They may not be closed to the idea of meeting and falling in love with someone much younger, but that isn’t their exclusive dating goal, either.

*And the vast, vast majority of single men I’ve known are looking for women reasonably near their own age.*

I also tread carefully here, knowing this is a very “hot” and sensitive topic. I’ve been single long enough to have witnessed many, many debates (arguments, fights, etc.) between single men and single

women over this subject. It always looks pretty much the same—the women are almost irrationally angry, while the men spout sham theology and calmly toss verbal grenades intended to incite the women even more.

### Two sides

I understand both sides. From the men's perspective, it's simple enough. They want kids. They figure they're still biologically capable of fathering children (as far as they know), so why not? Eric Clapton did it. Frank Gifford did it.

The female side is a little more complicated. It's hard enough for a woman to face the winding down of her biological clock. Then to have men her own age dismiss her on that basis—well, I can see where that would be a little annoying. They're taking it personally, even though it's not really about them at all.

Personally, it has never really bothered me that some men are looking for much younger women. I've always seen it as more of a convenient "early warning" device. These men are unwittingly tipping their hand, revealing a very unattractive character trait that I'd want to know about sooner rather than later anyway.

Their attitude towards women is more about "using" than "loving."

## What does the Church teach?

“Wait just a minute!” these men will object. “Our attitude is actually very Catholic! The Church has always taught that marriage is about children. We’re just following that teaching.”

First problem: the Church does not teach that marriage is “about” children. Marriage is about giving ourselves totally to each other, in openness to children. There’s a very big difference here. Our job is to unselfishly love each other, in every area of life, and not do anything to deliberately block conception. Deciding whether or not that love will result in a new human life is God’s domain, not ours. Couples of all ages find that He doesn’t necessarily bless them in that way. And their infertility doesn’t make their marriages any less real or valid.

*Marriage is about giving ourselves totally to each other,  
in openness to children.*

A man who deliberately excludes from marital consideration any woman near his own age, with whom he likely to be most compatible and have the most in common, does not come across as someone who is looking primary to give himself to a wife for better or worse. He comes across as someone who sees a woman primarily as means to an end—his children.

## Infertility for better or worse

“But I’ll love the woman I marry. I’ll give myself to her. I just want her to be younger so we’ll be more likely to have kids.” Really? And what if

she can't bear children? No woman—even if she already has children—knows for certain that she will be able to conceive in the future.

Worse yet, what if he can't? Infertility is the “worse” in “for better or worse.” And it's made that much worse yet when you've got a couple 20 years apart in age, in completely different stages of life, brought together largely because he was relying on her fertility to accomplish a goal. He thought he had stacked the deck in his favor, but he played and lost.

How flattering.

Don't think, incidentally, that this fact is lost on younger women, most of whom are “creeped out” by older men incessantly chasing them. I know I was. I wanted to be loved for myself, not just my fertility. Most women feel the same way—as do men.

I know that women are just as capable, in their own way, of using men as means to children instead of loving them as persons for their own sake. Either way, it's wrong.

### **What marriage is really about**

It's about the giving.

*Marriage is about two people looking at each other and saying “I give myself to you, just as you are, forever.”*

Most often, it happens between people who are roughly the same age, or at least of the same basic generation. People have the most in

common, the broadest basis on which to build a life together, when they grew up around the same time and are at the same stage of life.

I can't speak for men, but in my own case I can certainly say that I am more attracted to men my own age than to those who are much older or younger than I am. Younger guys don't understand my music. They don't know who Groucho Marx is. They don't remember TVs without remotes, or mood rings, or Atari. I can't relate.

Certainly it doesn't always work this way. Some people, in the course of dating, meet and fall in love with someone considerably older or younger. I have no problem with that. The problem is the "using" mentality inherent in limiting one's dating pool exclusively to a younger and presumably more fertile generation.

I'm sorry, guys. I really am. I understand wanting to hold on to the possibility of having children. It's just that, when you do it this way, you wind up succumbing to an attitude toward women that is unflattering at best, and profoundly un-Christian at worst.

And that doesn't make you attractive to women of any age.

## Chapter 8: We Had Sex. Now What?

by James Blankenship

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*“As soon as you willfully allow a dialogue with temptation to begin, the soul is robbed of peace, just as consent to impurity destroys grace.”*

*– St. Josemaria Escriva*

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My recent thoughts on chastity resonated with people and started a great discussion in the comment box about living out chastity in a dating relationship. One comment from Eloise stood out among the rest:

*I think a really good conversation, that would help many people, would be a conversation about what to do if you mess up. Other than going to confession of course!*

Yes, that would make for a great conversation! The easy answer that I've heard so many chastity speakers give is "just date chastely from the beginning, and don't put yourself in situations where you may have premarital sex."

That sounds well and good, but you already messed up. What do you do?

## **Be Forgiven**

Confession is the best place to start picking up the pieces. The Author of Life restores the life of grace in our soul through the words of the priest, "I absolve you of your sins..." The Father of Mercy opens up His arms and embraces His prodigal child with the words, "Your sin is forgiven, go, and sin no more."

*Confession is the best place to start picking up the pieces.*

Even though our sin is forgiven, the effects of our sin are still present. I once cut my hand very badly while slicing open an avocado. The knife was in and out, but the wound persisted. Confession takes the sin out of our soul, but we still need to work to fix the wound of unchastity.

All relationships involve two people and both people in the relationship need to work, as a couple, at fixing the brokenness caused by lust. If your boyfriend or girlfriend is unwilling to work toward a

chaste relationship or refuses to help fix the brokenness caused by premarital sex, then the relationship is broken and you need to move on and end that relationship.

If your boyfriend or girlfriend doesn't see premarital sex as something wrong, or even worse, if he/she insists it be part of your relationship, run away as quick as you can!

So what does the couple, hurt by impurity, need to do to heal the wound? I suggest three things: pray together, set clear boundaries, and ask a friend to be an accountability partner.

*Confession takes the sin out of our soul, but we still need to fix the wound left by lust.*

### **Pray Together**

During one of my marriage preparation meetings with the priest, father asked me and my fiancée if we prayed together. He said that most couples are willing to be naked with each other, but are too ashamed to stand before the Lord in prayer.

Adam and Eve hid themselves in the garden after they sinned so the best way to recover from sin is by standing before the Lord and praying.

My fiancée and I pray together each day. It has kept us chaste throughout dating relationship and even in our engagement. We call each other every morning to pray our morning prayers together. When we see each other, we always greet each other with a kiss and then

three Hail Mary's asking for chastity. Before we leave each other at night, we stand before the crucifix and pray whatever comes to the heart (you don't always need to pray using a formula prayer like the Hail Mary). We make it a point to attend Mass together on Sunday and pray the Rosary together.

Prayer is a powerful tool to heal a relationship damaged by sexual sin. And in healing your relationship, you are setting the groundwork for a solid future and holy relationship.

### **Set Clear Boundaries**

Boundaries and rules are viewed by our culture as limiting and restricting our freedom. But boundaries are good because sometimes those boundaries tell us where the edge of the cliff is, and helps us to avoid falling into grave sin.

I'm reminded of the old Roadrunner cartoons I watched growing up as a kid. The coyote was so intent on catching the roadrunner that he would run off a cliff. He would look down, realize his mistake then fall hard to the ground. Set boundaries with your boyfriend or girlfriend so you don't run off the cliff like the coyote.

Here are some possible boundaries you may want to consider:

- No passionate or tongue kissing.
- Keep your clothes on and no groping, and definitely no touching the private areas of the body.

- No living together before marriage and no spending the night at each other's house.
- End your time together at a specific time and perhaps even set an alarm to remind you to leave.

*Prayer is a powerful tool to heal a relationship damaged by sexual sin. And in healing your relationship, you are setting the groundwork for a solid future and holy relationship.*

Boundaries for each couple vary and also seem to move depending on the circumstances. One day you may be able to show your affection in a certain way, and the next day it may be completely inappropriate. If you are recovering from sexual sins, make sure those boundaries are strict and adhere to them like your life depends on it.

### **Find An Accountability Partner**

“Accountability is the ability and willingness to give an account to someone else of your actions and motives.”

(From [How to find an accountability partner](#))

Choose a close friend or maybe even a spiritual director, to give an account to of how you and your significant other spent your time. Ask them to help you stay within your established boundaries. If for example, you decide to set your departing time at 10 pm (remember no staying over at your boyfriend/girlfriend's house), ask your accountability partner to give you a call at 10:05 pm to make sure that

you left. You must also be honest with him or her. Your accountability partner is there to help you not condemn you..

Thanks Eloise for the comment. I'm sure a lot of people are searching for the same answers. If you suffer in your relationship from the wound caused by a lack of chastity, I hope and pray that you find some healing through prayer, setting strict boundaries, and an accountability partner. God will certainly heal you and reward you with virtue and happiness.

Mary, Virgin Most Pure, pray for us!

St. Joseph, Mary's Most Chaste Spouse, pray for us!

## Chapter 9: Why Can't I Have Sex? I'm Done Raising My Kids

by Susie Lloyd

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*“By Lust I mean that affection of the mind that aims at the enjoyment of one’s self and one’s neighbor without reference to God.”*

*– St. Augustine*

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Question: “Why is it so terribly sinful for women past the age of conceiving to have sex with a man of similar age?”

One of our readers asked the above question. He speaks for many in their golden years who ask: Why is marriage still a must when you can no longer have kids?

### **The #1 reason older people aren't getting married...**

Indeed, according to the New York Times, seniors are the **fastest growing segment** of the population that chooses to cohabitate rather than get married. Most cohabitating seniors have been married before. Unlike their millennial counterparts, for whom cohabitation is considered a step towards marriage, seniors shacking-up usually have no plans to make it official. Why? The reason most often cited is money.

Marriage to a second spouse could mess up their kids' inheritance. They could lose the benefits they have from their divorced or late spouses. They will almost certainly have to pay higher taxes. If they are not careful, they might inherit, not only their spouse's financial problems but their spouse's kids' financial problems.

Plus, when a relationship comes later in life, they run a greater risk of their partner getting sick or disabled. Who wants to tie themselves down as caregiver when they're supposed to be retired—not to mention, to be responsible for the bills? Marriage and all the permanence and all the risk is for the young. Later in life, most people are just looking for someone to keep them company, not build a future life with.

Among this population of cohabitating seniors are not a few Catholics. The above article mentions one client, “a staunch Catholic” who lost her deceased husband’s military pension and other benefits when she chose to remarry. Unfortunately, she was then widowed a second time. For her third time around, she chose to avoid the financial penalties that come with marriage and cohabitate instead. Punishing people for getting married just ain’t fair, is it? Something should be done about it.

### **But does Church teaching change based on age? Or fertility?**

Meanwhile, the first thing to realize is that dealing with laws that are hostile to our faith is nothing new. Previous generations of Catholics were told to burn incense to Jupiter in pagan Rome or to sign the Oath of Supremacy [stating that the king was head of the Church] in King Henry VIII’s England—just to name two stand-out examples. In every age, Christians have had to decide between God and mammon.

*In every age, Christians have had to decide  
between God and mammon.*

You ask: What could God possibly find against two people who love one another, who are past the age of starting a family together, committing to one another privately, and then sharing that love physically?

People once asked similar questions about the aforementioned examples. What could God have against burning incense or signing a piece of paper—as long as the person’s heart was in the right place?

Such a debate was featured in the play, *A Man for All Seasons*, about St. Thomas More. In this scene, St. Thomas More is talking to his daughter, Margaret:

MORE: You want me to swear to the Act of Succession?

MARGARET: “God more regards the thoughts of the heart than the words of the mouth.” Or so you’ve always told me.

MORE: Yes.

MARGARET: Then say the words of the oath and in your heart think otherwise.

MORE: What is an oath then but words we say to God? When a man takes an oath, Meg, he’s holding his own self in his own hands. Like water. (He cups his hands) And if he opens his fingers then—he needn’t hope to find himself again. Some men aren’t capable of this, but I’d be loathe to think your father one of them.

Many people indeed burned the incense to avoid persecution. Many signed the Oath to keep their heads. But many others forfeited their lives. What’s your life compared to your soul?

**For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and for the gospel will save it. —Mark 8:35**

If you want to see “staunch,” look no further than Jesus’ own words, above. Staunch means “committed, unwavering, faithful” even when it’s inconvenient. Or could prove fatal.

## Why is it that God reserves sex for marriage?

When a man and woman share their love physically, they give themselves to each other. Totally.

The union of two bodies is sacred. It's not the joining of one part of a person to another part of a person. We are not just bodies. We are not just souls. We are both. Sex is the intimate union of whole persons. Two become one flesh. If it's not a complete and unreserved giving, come what may, it is using someone. There needs to commitment. No reservations. It's that holy.

*The union of two bodies is sacred. It's not the joining of one part of a person to another part of a person.*

Jesus thought so highly of marriage that He made it a sacrament. Matrimony is no longer just a natural contract for the earthly good of the spouses. It is a sacred covenant ordained by God. You get grace from being married. It makes you holy and prepares you for the world to come.

Bishop Barron puts it this way: "Once Jesus clarified that male and female are destined to become one flesh, he further specified that 'What God has joined together,' no human being should put asunder...The bride and groom...had been brought together by God and precisely for God's reasons...their sexuality and their mutual love were in service of an even higher purpose."

## What does your heart truly desire?

It comes down to the question: What kind of support do you want in your old age? The support of this world that is unstable and finite? Or the promised support of God, who is love, who can not only provide for you in this world, but grant you eternal life?

A final thought. Even though golden agers are past the age of physically having children, they are still very much an influence on the generations that come after them. What are their children and grandchildren going to think when grandma or grandpa decides that one of the commandments no longer applies to them?

## Chapter 10: The Post-Divorce Dating Dilemma: Sex

by Lisa Duffy

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*“Chastity is a difficult, long term matter; one must wait patiently for it to bear fruit, for the happiness of loving kindness which it must bring. But at the same time, chastity is the sure way to happiness.”*  
– Pope John Paul II

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Sex is good!

That's what Pope John Paul II told us in his *Theology of the Body* addresses and that's what God wants you to understand. But sex has a purpose and a place, and that is within the confines of marriage.

Dating after divorce brings the issue of sex right to the forefront of discussion: whether or not sex is OK, how much intimacy is too much, and really, **why do you have to wait if you're not a virgin anymore, anyway?**

Divorced people get into dating with the best of intentions, but also with a serious handicap: You're already used to giving yourself to your spouse and it is hard to tell your body that now things have to change. Whether your experience with married sex was good or bad, you still experienced the freedom to be sexually intimate with your spouse and that is something that can be difficult to step away from after divorce.

Now I've read a lot of posts on the forum and I can see that **so many of you are vehemently committed to living a chaste life and having chaste relationships. I commend you and support you!**

But society has stacked the odds against you and sexual intimacy is still one of the most common mistake people make after a divorce.

Here are some suggestions that I found helped me date and remain chaste:

First, I made it known to my date that sexual intimacy was not an option when we planned our date. Since you are a member of

CatholicMatch, you already have a head-start on that, but it's good to be sure that your date is aware of your desire to remain chaste. Does this mean that holding hands and a kiss is out of the question?

No.

I think we all understand that showing affection is a good part of dating. **But just like drinking alcohol, your body tells you when you need to stop so you need to listen to those signals and not let things get carried away.**

Something else that's important, mostly for the ladies but certainly for men, is **dressing the right way**. A theater stage is shrouded by a curtain until it's showtime... A Christmas gift remains wrapped until December 25... A blindfold covers the eyes and blocks the view of the surprise until the time is just right...

Veils, shrouds, curtains, etc. are not for the purpose of hiding something. They are for the purpose of revealing—when the time is right. Even the Eucharist remains concealed in the tabernacle—not to be hidden from us, but to reveal the glory of Jesus in Adoration and the sacrament of the Eucharist at the appointed times.

*Veils, shrouds, curtains, etc. are not for the purpose of hiding something. They are for the purpose of revealing when the time is right*

If you are divorced, you should be guarding your gift, the gift of yourself, with utmost care and protection until the appointed time arrives and you may reveal yourself again.

Safeguard the gift of your heart, mind, body and soul—the **total donation of yourself in marriage**—with the understanding of the sacredness and importance. Dress yourself in such a way that people can see you honor the gift you possess and it is precious to you, as it will be to someone else when everything else is right. In doing so, peace and the companionship of Christ will reign in your heart and your joy will be complete.

Many people believe the standards of chastity are too difficult to abide by in today's world, and I understand that. As I mentioned before, society has definitely stacked the odds against us. But allow me to offer you another analogy that puts this into perspective.

Imagine an elementary school that has its playground along a busy city street. If the playground has no fence, the potential for disaster is eminent. All kinds of bad situations can and would happen. But if the playground has a fence, then traffic flows and children play freely without accidents or disasters.

This is precisely what the Church is trying to do by giving you these parameters. The Church, which simply upholds the teachings of Christ, wants you to live a morally safe and happy life; to live freely without the potential for disaster. Most certainly to help you avoid experiencing the pain of divorce yet again! And these parameters are

not limited to divorced men and women, they are for everyone regardless of their state in life. Chastity, fidelity, honesty... these are the boundaries we are all called to abide by.

*The Church, which simply upholds the teachings of Christ, wants you to live a morally safe and happy life; to live freely without the potential for disaster.*

As you find your matches and go on dates, I hope that you have great times and wonderful experiences getting to know other people and that when the day comes for you to stand at the altar and take your vows again, you can do so with the thrilling joy of knowing that everything is right, just as it should be because you saved the honeymoon for after the wedding.

## Chapter 11: Is Living Together a Recipe for Success?

*by Mary Beth Bonacci*

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*“Holy Purity is granted by God when it is asked for with humility.”  
– St. Josemaria Escriva*

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Have you ever wondered about those statistics on living together and divorce? Studies consistently show that couples who lived together

before marriage have a *much* higher divorce rate—the latest I read said 50% higher—than couples who didn't cohabit.

That has always seemed strange to me. After all, a lot of those couples are living together in an effort to *prevent* divorce. They figure you can't really get to know someone until you live with them. So they live with them. They move in together to see if they really want to spend the rest of their lives together, if they can stand the day to day with this person for the rest of their days.

And yet, they divorce at higher rates than those who didn't "try it out" first.

At first, I figured it was a reflection on the people themselves. I thought that perhaps people who are likely to live together before marriage are the same people who are likely to divorce instead of "sticking it out" when times get tough. Religious people are less likely to cohabit, and less likely to divorce. So I figured perhaps we were just seeing a contrast between the less religious people and the more religious people.

Not a perfect theory, because I've known a lot of good, faithful Catholics who didn't cohabit, and who later found themselves in extremely justifiable divorces. But it seemed like a good working hypothesis.

But apparently that isn't the whole story. It isn't just that people who are likely to cohabit are also likely to divorce. Rather, it is the very

act of living together that makes for less stable marriages, and more divorce down the line.

The *New York Times* recently ran an article on “The Downside of Cohabiting Before Marriage.” The author, clinical psychologist Meg Jay, talks about a phenomenon she called “sliding, not deciding.”

*Rather, it is the very act of living together that makes for less stable marriages, and more divorce down the line.*

Here's how it goes. A couple starts dating. They start having sex. Soon they're sleeping over at each others' places, and they realize it doesn't make sense to be maintaining two households when one is empty most of the time. So they decide to move in together. They may have a wide variety of motivations at this point. They want to save money. They may or may not be “testing the waters” for marriage. Often, the women sees it as an “audition” or “trial run” for marriage, while the man is more motivated by convenience. Regardless, it is generally true that they are not, at the time they move in together, both convinced that they want to marry each other. They're still in the “finding out” stage.

But what happens? They make a significant investment in each other. They share an address. They buy furniture together. They may even buy a house together. They get a pet. They present themselves to their neighborhood—and the world—as a “couple.” They mingle their lives, and their assets, to a significant degree. Jay calls these “set-up

costs”—physical and emotional costs paid to enter into the cohabitation arrangement.

The problem with “set-up costs” is that they lead to “switching costs” if the relationship doesn’t work out. Breaking up is traumatic enough as it is. The break-up of a sexual relationship is infinitely *more* traumatic, due to the bonding caused by the hormones released in sexual activity. (More on that later.) Compound *that* with the additional costs inherent in a living together break-up—having to move out of your home, fight over furniture, create a custody arrangement for the dog. Couples reach a point where they have so much invested in the relationship that it’s easier to stay together than to deal with all of the physical and emotional “switching costs” involved in a break up.

And so, instead of making a good, rational decision about whether or not this is the best person to spend the rest of their lives with, they “slide” into marriage.

But the relationship often isn’t built on a solid foundation. Whatever problems existed in the relationship before marriage continue to grow. Then children come, placing additional pressures on the couple. Small financial problems compound. Over time, the “costs” associated with marrying the wrong person start to outweigh the “costs” of leaving.

Hence the higher divorce rate. It isn’t so much that living together changed what their marital relationship would look like. It’s more that, if they had maintained the objectivity that comes with living apart, they probably wouldn’t have married in the first place.

Look, I know a lot of couples who lived together before the wedding and went on to have fabulous marriages. And I've seen more than a couple of train wrecks in which bride and groom didn't share an address until after the honeymoon.

But the statistics are clear. If you want to increase the likelihood that your vows stick, and that forever really turns out to be forever, don't terminate your lease just yet.

Sleep in your own bed until you walk down the aisle. It'll pay huge dividends in the long run.

## Chapter 12: “Have Sex With As Many People As You Can!”

*by Chris Easterly*

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*“Many live like angels in the middle of the world. You, why not you?”  
– St. Josemaria Escriva*

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My buddy Mike and I were walking down Melrose Blvd. in Hollywood. I had just revealed to him that my wife recently had an affair. At first, he

thought I was making a bad joke, but then realized I was serious. He was shocked.

He made some disparaging remarks about her as we continued our stroll to a local Korean eatery. Part of me felt edified that he was solidly in my corner. Mike is not a Christian, but he's a loyal friend. He tried to encourage me.

"You know what this means? You're free now," he said. "You need to get out there and have as much sex as you can."

I saw the impending collapse of my marriage as a tragedy. He saw it as an opportunity.

### **When well-meant advice misses the mark...**

Mike's advice, which from his point-of-view, I believe, was genuinely well-meaning, was that I needed to take this opportunity to enjoy my newfound "freedom." He argued that it was not only an opportunity, it was actually a necessity. Now that I was going to be feeling broken and lonely, I deserved, even *needed* to have sex with as many women as I could. I would need the physicality, the warmth, the intimate connection with another human being.

*I saw the impending collapse of my marriage as a tragedy.*

*He saw it as an opportunity.*

One could argue that his advice made a certain kind of sense. One could also argue that it was terrible advice.

Before I met my wife, I had not always been a paragon of chastity. I had been a Christian since I was a teenager and I took my faith seriously. Even so, I'm a flesh-and-blood man and I wasn't immune to sexual lures. As a young adult, I had indulged in sexual dalliances with a couple of women, and later regretted it.

This didn't compute with Mike. Sex is natural, sex is good. Why feel bad about doing it?

**Sex is not only natural, but supernatural.**

He was right about the natural and good part. But he seemed oblivious to the very real emotional consequences of having sex outside marriage. Both of my sexual encounters had ended in broken relationships and a deep sadness and heartache.

I think I had always known that sex is not just something you do casually. Something deep inside me (the Holy Spirit) always somehow knew that sex is not common. It's cosmic. It's inextricably tied up with our soul and spirit and psyche.

*Sex is not common. It's cosmic.*

A body separated from a soul is a corpse. If the two aren't bound together, you're dead. And, for whatever reason, God willed it that way—when you separate the spiritual from the physical, you're as good as dead.

That's why physical sex outside the spiritual bond of marriage always kills you a little. Or a lot. I had experienced this before. So something in

me intuited that Mike's well-intentioned advice was wrong. Sure, sex with a new woman who wasn't my wife might be thrilling and consoling and pleasurable. But only for a brief moment. I knew that it would actually leave me (and her) feeling empty and worse than before.

**The Church's rules aren't arbitrary—they help us to love others more fully.**

Why does Scripture and the Church's wisdom tradition tell us that sex outside marriage is not good? It's not because the Church wants to arbitrarily impose moral rules on us, or suppress our natural desires. Exactly the opposite. The Church *wants* us to enjoy our natural desires. But it knows those desires can only be truly, happily fulfilled within the context of an exclusive marital bond.

Why is it this way? I don't know. But that's apparently how God designed it, and the evidence of this fact, for me at least, was in the regret and misery I'd felt when I'd done it my way instead of God's.

*In the end, sex outside marriage would only be  
a false solace, a sham intimacy.*

So as Mike and I sat in the Korean restaurant, drinking Sapporo beers and eating pork dumplings that night, I knew his advice to have sex with as many people as I could did not ring true. If I did that, I'd only hurt myself and the women I slept with. I appreciated Mike's support, but knew I'd have to go another way.

It wouldn't be easy. But if I could endure the loneliness and the lack of physical affection, at least my soul would be free. What good would it do to drag myself and another person down into a mess that would only hurt us both? In the end, it would only be a false solace, a sham intimacy. And it would cause more damage than a fleeting moment of pleasure is worth.

**Even when you give into sexual temptations, God is merciful.**

I don't say this to sound sanctimonious. I say it because I've come to realize that God is smarter than me. I had already made mistakes in this area, so why make them again? If one tire on your car goes flat, you don't just give up and slash the other three tires. You fix the flat tire and get back on the road. That's what I'd have to do.

*If one tire goes flat, you don't just slash the other three.  
You fix it and get back on the road.*

I'm grateful for friends like Mike. I'm also grateful for God's wisdom in giving me advice that will make my life better and easier in the long run. And I'm grateful for His mercy in allowing me to start over and do things a better way, a way that will keep me from harm and empower me to live the abundant life He's given me to live.

Chastity isn't easy, especially in our culture that teaches us it's our right and need to indulge our God-given desires, without regard to any consequences. But there are consequences. I don't know why it's that way, but again, that's the way God made it. And He also made a way

for us to ultimately feel free and be happier than we could ever imagine, if we do it His way.

So for now, I'm trying to keep all four tires on the road. Because I know, from experience, that it will eventually keep me from crashing and will lead me to the abundant life God promises.

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## **CONCLUSION**

Well, there you have it folks. The Catholic Single's Guide to Sex. We hope you learned a little something, and maybe felt reassured and a bit more convicted in your beliefs about sex and marriage.

What did we miss? Do you still have any more burning questions about living in a sex-drenched world? If so, just shoot us an email at [cmi@catholicmatch.com](mailto:cmi@catholicmatch.com).

Alright, carry on. Keep fighting the good fight.

St. Michael, defend us in battle. Amen.

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For more thought-provoking reads, visit the CatholicMatch Institute blog ([www.catholicmatch.com/institute](http://www.catholicmatch.com/institute)) where we offer advice on dating, spirituality, single living and more.