
SEX



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WHAT'S THIS CHAPTER ALL ABOUT?



"I'm so excited! I found out that I'm the only one he is sleeping with!!!!" This was the actual text sent to one of my friends on campus last year. Sarah was basing the commitment of this guy she started seeing on the fact that apparently she was the only girl he was having casual sex with. This was her criteria telling her that their one-month-long relationship going well. She naïvely trusted that this guy would be faithful to her when there was no real commitment on his side distinguishing her from any other woman on campus.

Can you have a free and stable relationship involving casual sex? When challenged on the notion of waiting to have sex until marriage she stated, "I wouldn't buy a car without test driving it" and "this is only better preparing me for my sex life in marriage." Contrary to popular belief, sleeping around with one person and then on to the next does not improve your skills in the bedroom but actually hurts them. It would be similar to saying you are an expert in literature because you read the first page of many books. Great love making takes patience and practice with one person. It's here, living in the plan that God has for sex and marriage, that we achieve the heights of pleasure, which is what hook-ups are after but will never be able to achieve.

Sleeping around with multiple partners wrecks your ability to attain authentic intimacy. A new discipline called "interpersonal neurobiology" studies how relationships actually change the brains of the people involved in them. According to Dr. Gregory K. Popcak, "Scientists now know that, far from being mere recreation, sex is a process that physiologically bonds two people to one another by altering both brain chemistry and brain function in the lovers." These changes happen in the first experience of love-making and continue strengthening throughout the extent of the relationship.

It is simply biologically impossible to have sex with "no strings attached." Biological and emotional baggage will remain with each partner far past the sexual encounter and is extremely difficult to heal. This is revealed when your friend in that unhealthy relationship finally breaks up but you continue to hear, "I just don't understand how I can't get over him." No matter how much of a jerk he was, your friend is biologically hooked. So "free love" turns out to be more like life-sucking bondage.

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We might be pleasantly surprised to find out that God is not a cosmic kill-joy. When it comes to sex, He's actually its biggest fan. This is why He has a plan to make it awesome and why not following that plan leaves us feeling empty and confused. The good news is that God created sex, and He desires it as a culmination to profound and life-giving unity. It's our hope that this study will help unpack your personal views on sex and how they line up with you being fully alive.

WHAT INFLUENCES YOUR VIEWS ON SEX?

Give them some time to read over silently

Healthy progression in a relationship begins with getting to know the person's interests and insights through friendship, hanging out, and dating. Then the relationship progresses in courtship with an understanding of their longings and desires, and falling in love. At the altar, their hopes and dreams begin to blossom. And finally, their love is consummated in sex and lifelong commitment to one another. Simply put, the stages of relational development are sharing Mind, Heart, Soul, and finally Body.

Too often, this order is completely reversed and two people find themselves giving their bodies in bed a few months (or moments) after meeting. Their order is more like Body, Soul, Heart, Mind. Or sometimes even just Body, Body, Body.

There are many reasons people turn to sex. Here are a few:

Approval and Appreciation

"Having sex makes me feel wanted, loved, approved, and affirmed."

Intimacy and Physical Comfort

"Sex makes me feel closer to him/her" or "Looking at porn makes me feel less lonely" or "Having sex or looking at porn relieves my stress."

Security and Control

"I think that having sex will make him/her stay with me."

Influence and Power

"I feel powerful when I am able to sleep with multiple guys/girls" or "I like to give or withhold sex to get what I want."

Why are these reasons understandable yet insufficient?

Read questions aloud and discuss

What is the problem with our culture's notion of "do whatever feels good?"

Why do you think our hook-up culture is so attractive to college students?

Do you have any real-life examples of relationships similar to the one in the introduction? Friends? You?

What do you see as the biggest obstacle to the hook-up norm ever changing?

FULLY ALIVE | SEX | GOD

WHAT DOES GOD SAY ABOUT SEX?

Contrary to popular belief, God is a fan of sex! He created it! The Song of Songs is filled with images between two lovers. This is in Scripture, not because it's bad, but because sex is good and holy.

Read the following Scripture passages: *Pick your favorite 2 or have members of your study look each of them up and share*

Song of Songs 5:1

Mark 7:21-22

Ephesians 5:32-33

How do these Scriptural references to sex and sexuality compare to the culture's outlook on them?

Read questions aloud and discuss

What does it mean to say the relationship between a man and a woman images Christ and his Church?

What does this practically look like?

Pope John Paul II said that the opposite of love is not hate, but use. When a person is used rather than loved, then both the person using and the one being used are degraded. The Church expresses this reality in positive terms:

"The person is thus capable of a higher kind of love than [eroticism], which only sees objects as a means to satisfy one's appetites; the person is capable rather of friendship and self-giving, with the capacity to recognize and love persons for themselves. Like the love of God, this is a love capable of generosity. One desires the good of the other because he or she is recognized as worthy of being loved."

- Pontifical Council for the Family The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality

HOLY SEX	EROTICISM
Very Pleasurable	Very Pleasurable
Driven by Intimacy and Arousal	Driven Solely by Arousal
Overcomes Shame	Causes Shame
Works for the Good of the Other	Uses the Other
Welcomes Children	Fears Children
Shares the Whole Self	Withholds the Self
More Joyful and Vital with Time	More Stagnant and Boring with Time (like a drug)
Gives Life and Health	Brings Disease and Death

Read questions aloud and discuss

How do you think that the pleasure derived from Holy Sex is different from Eroticism?

Have these distinctions helped you better understand God's plan for sex? If so, how?

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Fasting, Fleeing, and Praying

Read I-by-I, open for discussion, ask questions to direct convo

“Don’t be such a coward as to be ‘brave.’ Flee!” –St. Josemaria Escriva

First, Jesus said that if something causes you to sin sexually, deal with it in a serious manner (Matthew 5:27–30). If you need to fast from a book, computer, TV, or dating relationship for the time being, then do so if it’s holding you back. Remember that getting rid of the object won’t cure your problem, but it will help you in that it will stop feeding your sinful desires. Second, we are to flee from sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18). In most cases (although not all), men will give into visual temptations that seek instant gratification (i.e. porn, masturbation, one-night stands) and women will give into emotional temptations that build slowly (i.e. romance novels, fantasizing about men). While this is a generalization, the opposite can certainly be true, so discern which things make you the most vulnerable and run!

Taking concrete actions to amend our lives opens us up to an authentic prayer life, and this prayer life in turn strengthens us for the journey. Thus, St. Alphonsus Ligouri says, “Chastity is a virtue. . . . Whoever prays for it will certainly attain it.”

Don't Awaken Love

“Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.” (Song of Sol. 2:7). Before its proper time and context, what could become love withers away as lust. St. Augustine says, “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.” Michael Lawrence says, “Foreplay is the one-way on-ramp onto the highway of sexual intercourse. In our cars, we are not meant to slow down on an on-ramp, and we are not meant to go backwards. That is not what on-ramps are designed for. They are meant to get the car up to speed. So it is with foreplay.” Even if you are not having intercourse with someone, things like erotic kissing, petting, and dry sex are all “on-ramp” activities that awaken love and diminish its power before the right time. (godly gifts study)

Sacramental Grace

God gave us the gift of the Sacrament of Confession to make peace with Him, each other, and ourselves. He invites us to experience His Mercy and gives us grace through the Sacrament to give us strength in future moments of temptation. “In persona Christi” refers to how the priest acts “in the Person of Christ” to forgive our sins and to give us strength to follow Him more closely. A priest will often give practical encouragement to assist you in the struggle. If it’s been a while since you’ve gone to Confession, find out when its available and try to go this week. If you’re not Catholic and/or would like a better understanding of what Confession is, your Bible study leader can get together with you and help you answer any questions you may have.

Accountability is especially helpful with sexual sins. A priest or a trusted friend can be a tremendous aid, as long as the one helping you truly desires that you grow in virtue. There is computer software available that allows your accountability partner to know the websites you visit. Jesus wants to free us from entrapment in sexual sins and have us, instead, enjoy the real deal in marriage!

If accountability sounds helpful, find someone this week to ask to be your partner and ask them to help you.