

Sex, Love, and You
Making the Right Decision
Leader's Guide

by Tom and Judy Lickona

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Introduction

In the title of our book for teenagers—*Sex, Love, and You: Making the Right Decision*—the “right decision” refers to the choice to live chastely. Similarly, the term “chastity” is sometimes misunderstood as meaning simply abstinence. Correctly understood, *chastity is the right use of sexual intimacy*, whatever a person’s state in life. The choice to be chaste involves all people.

For a single person, chastity is refraining from sexual intimacy (which includes intercourse and all other forms of sexual touching and passion).

For a married person, chastity is reserving all sexual intimacy for one’s spouse and keeping sexual intercourse open to life.

For a consecrated celibate, chastity is living out the promise, for one’s whole life, to refrain from sexual intimacy for the love of God.

This *Leader’s Guide* is especially intended for teachers, catechists, youth ministers, and parents who are working with teenagers in covering the material in *Sex, Love, and You*. Activities for large and small group use, as well as individual assignments and prayers, make up this short guide.

In using this *Leader’s Guide*, keep in mind that some young people in your class or group are or have been sexually involved. Very often, this will be because their conscience was poorly formed regarding sex. That certainly reduces the degree of their moral culpability for past mistakes, but it’s still important for them to ask God’s forgiveness (in the sacrament of Reconciliation if they’re Catholic) for any past sexual involvement. This will give them a clear conscience and the grace to make a new start.

Young people who have been sexually involved need our reassurance that God loves them, that he will always forgive them no matter what they've done, and that he will give them the help they need to do the right thing if they stay close to him through prayer.

In our experience, it's best not to take questions "from the floor" about sex (you never know what a student is going to say) but instead to have students write out questions and submit them anonymously. If you've had experience answering questions about this subject, you may be comfortable responding as soon as you've collected them. Or you may wish to sort them out and take time to develop your answers. You may also want to decide which questions are best answered in a single-sex group and which in a mixed group.

For each unit from *Sex, Love and You*, we have provided here a variety of possible activities and assignments that we hope will enrich and personalize the reading. The activities are designed to work, however, even if students haven't done the reading beforehand. The *Leader's Guide* material is divided by units as follows:

Main Messages Brief summary statements for the material in the unit are provided.

FAQs These questions and answers can be introduced by the leader and shared with the teens.

Quotes and Questions Several related quotes on the topic are offered.

You may want to display some of these on posters around the meeting space or as part of a PowerPoint presentation. The accompanying questions can be assigned for journal writing or discussion.

Group Activities A variety of activities are offered for use with the entire group, or as one-to-one or triad discussions. Several of the activities present a scenario and ask the teens to brainstorm possible responses. At the end of the activity time, call on one representative from each group to summarize the group's responses. Record sample responses on the board or a flipchart.

Individual Assignments Some suggestions are provided to the teens for journaling, research, or personal action.

Prayer Starters Several beginning prayer statements related to the main message are included. Share these prayers with the teens, incorporate them into beginning and ending group prayers, or develop group prayer services around these statements, many of which are from Scripture.

Regardless of how you use the ideas in the *Leader's Guide*, we think it will be helpful to keep in mind the following main themes from *Sex, Love, and You*:

1. Not all teens are engaging in sexual intimacy. Young people need to know that they are not abnormal or even in the minority for choosing not to do this. It is intelligent and moral to choose to save sexual intimacy for marriage.
2. Unless sexual intimacy occurs in the context of marriage, it is not truly an expression of love for the other person. It is an expression of love for *oneself*—getting what one wants at the expense of another.
3. Sexual intimacy outside of marriage causes many problems for the people involved, often for their friends and families, and for any new life that may result. These problems are physical, emotional, and spiritual.

4. Our culture, including our government, medical establishment, health providers, and media (film, television, and music industries) have for many years been encouraging the misuse of sexual intimacy. The real truth has been buried: God created sexual intimacy for a husband and wife as a way of participating in his love and plan of creation.
5. The longer that false beliefs about sex are perpetuated, the worse the problems become: increased sexual saturation in ads, television, movies; increasingly available and ever more perverse pornography; sexual addiction; sexually transmitted diseases; abortions; unwed pregnancies; sexual harassment; sexual assault; infidelity; the sexual abuse of children; children acting out sexually and sometimes abusing younger children; and the damage done to families by these problems. All of this creates a toxic sexual environment for any young person to be growing up in, making it very important to find support for leading a chaste lifestyle, including having friends who value chastity.
6. Chastity is just one of the moral laws we must obey in order to be happy in this life. Following these laws may at times be difficult, but it is well worth the effort and reward, which includes life forever with God in heaven.

Tom and Judy Lickona

[ch]Part 1 Distinguishing Between Myth and Fact

[a]Main Messages

- Lots of teens have *not* had sex, and many others stop after the first time. In leading a chaste life style, it helps to understand the different reasons why some young people do get involved in sexual activity.
- A decision is something we should make with our mind, not our feelings. Many people, misled by sexual feelings, confuse sexual intimacy with true intimacy.

[a]FAQs

What percentage of teens have had sex?

High school students who say they have *not* had sexual intercourse are now in the majority according to recent surveys. The percent of high school boys—who account for most of the change—not having had intercourse rose from 39 percent in 1990 to 51 percent in 1997. Virginity rates are even higher among sub-groups of youth with clear life goals and strong moral and religious convictions about waiting until marriage.

If you've gotten sexually involved, is it too late to change?

It's never too late to change. God gives us the freedom to choose a different path at any moment. With the help of God's grace, many young people have stopped being sexually active and embraced a chaste lifestyle.

What causes some young persons to get involved in sexual activity?

Young people get involved in sexual activity because of desire and short-term gratification, the desire for intimacy, peer or partner pressure, media influences, boredom, risk-taking, the influence of drinking and drugs, low self-esteem, lack of life goals, and an inability to answer the question, “Why *shouldn't* I have sex?”

[a]Quotes and Questions

Your hormones don't determine you. They may rage or make you crazy, but God's grace can handle your hormones.—Fr. Dave Pivonka

What does this statement mean to you?

I don't want my wife to sleep with anyone but me, and I want to give her the same respect.—Elijah Martin

How does waiting show respect for your future spouse?

Love is patient . . . love is kind.—1 Corinthians 13:4

Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier.—Mother Teresa

In light of these statements, why wouldn't premarital sex be an act of love?

Yesterday is gone. What matters is today and the choices I make for my future.—

Libby Gray

Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

Sexual intercourse is a gift that says, “Do not open until marriage.” If you’ve already unwrapped it, wrap it up again!—Molly Kelly

What does it mean to “wrap it up again?”

Our main reproductive organ is our brain.—Molly Kelly

Why do you think this is true?

Real intimacy, real love, comes from holy, chaste relationships.—Father Dave

Pivonka

Why do you think Father Dave says this?

It’s easier to share your body than your soul.—A teenager

Why is this true?

[a]Group Activities

1. *How to handle sexual pressure?* Your boyfriend or girlfriend—whom you really like a lot and don’t want to lose—is pressuring you to have sex, saying, “If you loved me, you would.” *You don’t want to get sexually involved. What could you say?* (See pp. ____ of *Sex, Love, and You* for sample responses to sexual pressure lines.)
2. *How to help someone start over?* Many young people have put past mistakes behind them and chosen to lead a chaste lifestyle in the future. Share this story of one girl who made that choice:

I've had sex with a lot of guys, but I was always drunk so I didn't think it mattered. Now I realize that I gave each of those guys a part of myself. I don't want all that pain and hurt anymore. I'm going to make a new beginning and not have sex again until I'm married.¹

But other teens think, "I'm damaged goods. It's too late for me." *What could you say to a person who feels like this, to help them believe it's not too late to change?*

Brainstorm possible responses.

3. *Sex Has a Price Tag.* View the video, *Sex Has a Price Tag*, by Pam Stenzel (available from *One More Soul*, www.OMSoul.com ; 1-800-307-7685. *One More Soul* is an excellent source of books, pamphlets, and videos on all aspects of Catholic teaching on both premarital and marital sexuality.) Pam Stenzel is one of the most popular and compelling speakers on chastity and why it is the only viable choice.

4. *Why are some teens having sex?* In a survey by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, more than 90 percent of teens agreed with the statement, "Teens should be given a strong message that they should abstain from sex." Most of those teens who had had sex said they wish they hadn't. In light of these facts, why do approximately half of teens nevertheless get involved in sexual activity? *With a partner or in triads, take ten minutes to list, in order of importance, what you think are the top five reasons for teen sexual activity. Report your rankings to the larger group and compare lists.*

5. *What are the rewards of waiting?* One study found that teens who were *not* having sex typically agreed strongly with the statement, “There are many benefits of saving sex for marriage.” *In triads, take five minutes to list as many benefits of waiting for marriage as you can. Report your list to the group.*

6. *Witness.* Try to have a positive influence on the sexual decisions of others—by your own example, by matter-of-factly sharing the reasons why you’ve chosen to save sexual intimacy for marriage, or by both your words and example. *Share what you would say if you found out a friend is sexually involved or is thinking of getting involved.*

7. *Trust your feelings?* A friend who is thinking of having sex says, “We really love each other. I think we should trust our feelings.” *What could you say to encourage your friend to base this decision on something other than feelings? Compare responses.*

8. *Looking for love.* One teenage girl said she had slept with fifteen guys in the past three months. Her parents had just gone through a divorce. She said, “There is so much pain when I go home. For a minute, when a guy holds me, it feels like love.” *Why do people often settle for sex when what they really want is love? Share your thoughts on this question.*

9. *Getting to know you.* True human intimacy is based on knowing a person—their thoughts, feelings, hopes, and dreams—and valuing them for the person they are. Often we don't get to know a person in this way because we don't know how to. The art of asking questions can help us. Working with a partner, interview each other (about 15 minutes each), asking the following:

- *What's one good thing that happened today?*
- *What are two things you enjoy doing? Why do you like doing them?*
- *Who is someone you admire? Why?*
- *What makes you feel good about yourself?*
- *What makes you sad?*
- *What do you worry about?*
- *What's one of your greatest achievements so far?*
- *What is a way you've helped another person?*
- *What's one way you've changed as a person?*
- *How do you make decisions about important things?*
- *What is something you have strong beliefs about?*
- *What is something in your life that you're grateful for?*
- *What are two of your goals in life?*
- *What do you see as your purpose in life?*
- *What is your concept of God?*
- *When do you feel closest to God?*

[a]Individual Assignments

1. *Media messages.* What are the sexual values and messages of many contemporary movies and TV shows (such as *Friends*)? *Make a list and give examples.*

2. *Get right with God.* Honestly examine your conscience (Parts 3 and 4 of *Sex, Love, and You* can help you do this) and ask God to forgive you for any past mistakes in the area of sexual behavior. If you are Catholic, seek God's forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation. (This will give you peace and help in staying on the right course in the future. If you slip, go to confession again. Don't give in to discouragement. There's an old spiritual saying, "All discouragement comes from the devil.")

3. *Set life goals.* It's been said that "the purpose of life is a life of purpose." *Make a list of 50 goals you'd like to accomplish in your lifetime. Group them in different categories: education, career, income, fun/adventure, travel, self-improvement, spiritual, service to others, major accomplishments, marriage and family. Make a second list of the ten goals that are most important to you. Then write a paragraph on your most important goal.* (This assignment is adapted from one given by Hal Urban, an award-winning high school teacher, who says students told him this was one of the most valuable activities they ever did. Hal also invited his students to share their lists in class.)

4. *How does saving sex for marriage affect your life goals? Write some thoughts in response to the questions:* How might saving sex for marriage help me achieve my life goals? How might having sex before marriage keep me from achieving my goals?

5. *Form your conscience correctly.* Make a sincere effort to form your conscience correctly about a moral issue—for example, pornography, masturbation, or contraception. Check out what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches (see paragraph 2352 on masturbation, paragraph 2354 on pornography, and paragraph 2370 on contraception).

[a]Prayer Starters

- “Lord, I’m sorry for past mistakes regarding sex. Help me to accept your forgiveness and save all sexual intimacy for the person I marry.”
- “Lord, give me the courage to speak up when friends or other peers are making sexual decisions that will hurt them and their future. Give me the words to say and the grace not to worry what others will think of me.”
- “Lord, help me to know and follow your will, not mine.”
- “Lord, help me to be honest with myself and honest with you.”
- “Jesus, help me seek and find true intimacy with others.”
- Pray a decade of the Rosary for a friend to have the strength to make the right decisions about sex.

[ch]Part 2 True Love Waits: The Dangers of Premarital Sex

[a]Main Messages

- Though the discovery of pregnancy outside of marriage can be a terrifying experience, there are life-affirming ways to handle this crisis.
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) can damage your health, cause emotional distress, and rob you of your ability to have a baby.
- Sexual intimacy outside the committed relationship of marriage can have hurtful emotional and spiritual consequences now and in the future.

[a]FAQs

What should you do if you are facing an unmarried pregnancy?

If you are facing an unmarried pregnancy, take the long view: call a crisis pregnancy center for counseling and support and trust that God will help you grow stronger from this experience. If you can't care for your baby, bring happiness to others by placing it for adoption. Don't destroy God's gift of life through abortion.

What are important facts about prenatal development?

Within four to eight days from conception, the baby's sex has been determined; at eighteen days, the heart is beating; eyes form at nineteen days; brain waves are present at six weeks.

What are the risks of an abortion to the mother?

Bleeding, infection, uterine perforation, cervical injury, and death are some of the risks to the mother who has an abortion. Possible later consequences: miscarriage, having a premature or deformed baby, breast cancer, and post-abortion syndrome—e.g., feelings of guilt, anger, and depression.

What are six common abortion procedures?

Suction, dilation and evacuation, saline, prostaglandin, partial-birth abortion, and the RU-486 drug are six common abortion procedures.

What should you do if you've had an abortion or know someone who has?

Seek spiritual healing—and encourage others to do so—by asking for God's forgiveness (in the sacrament of Reconciliation if you are Catholic) and by getting help from post-abortion support ministries such as Project Rachael (www.marquette.edu/rachael tel.: 1-800-5-WECARE).

How are STDs transmitted?

All of the six leading STDs infecting teens can be transmitted through *any form of genital contact* with another person, including intercourse and oral sex. HIV/AIDS can also be transmitted by the transfusion of contaminated blood, having HIV-infected blood enter an open wound on your body, using a contaminated intravenous needle, or nursing from an infected mother. Most STDs can be passed from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby or infant, often with life-threatening consequences.

Who gets STDs?

People who have sex with a partner infected by a sexually transmitted disease contract STDs. This can happen in marriage if your spouse is infected, but it almost always happens outside of marriage because unmarried partners don't know what the other person might be carrying. By age 24, one in three sexually active persons will get an STD.

Who is more at risk—guys or girls?

Girls. Biologically, girls are more vulnerable than men to STDs. STDs, including HIV/AIDS, are more easily passed from men to women than from women to men. Women are more likely to suffer long-term health consequences such as infertility, tubal pregnancy, and cervical cancer.

What are the six STDs that most commonly infect unmarried, sexually active young persons, and what are their major health consequences?

The six most common STDs are: *human papilloma virus*, which can cause cervical cancer; *chlamydia*, which can cause pelvic inflammatory disease, scarring and blocking of the fallopian tubes, and consequent infertility or tubal pregnancy; *herpes 2*, which may cause periodic outbreaks of blisters; *gonorrhea*, which in boys may cause a burning sensation while urinating and in girls may cause pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility; *syphilis*, which untreated can live in the body and eventually damage skin, bones, the liver, heart, and brain; and *HIV/AIDS*, which attacks and gradually destroys the body's immune system.

Can STDs be cured?

STDs that are caused by *bacteria*—such as chlamydia, syphilis, and gonorrhea—can be treated with medication and cured, although consequences such as infertility may be permanent. STDs that are caused by *viruses*—such as herpes, human papilloma virus, and HIV/AIDS—cannot be cured although some of their symptoms can be treated.

If you have an STD, do you usually know it?

No. Most of the time, there are no visible symptoms, and you can pass the STD on through sexual contact with another person without even realizing it. Examination by a doctor is often necessary to detect the disease. Undetected and untreated, the disease will usually produce symptoms.

What should you do if you have already been sexually active outside marriage?

As soon as possible, go to a doctor or clinic for a check-up to see if you have any STDs, get treatment, and then do not engage in sexual intimacy again until you are married.

Why does sexual intimacy have emotional consequences?

Sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual touching involve giving ourselves to someone in a personal and intimate way. Sex is designed to create and deepen an attachment between two persons. In marriage, that's a good thing. Outside of marriage, the attachment created by sex will, in most cases, end—causing emotional pain.

What are some of the emotional consequences of premarital sex?

Some of these consequences are worry about pregnancy and AIDS, disappointment and emotional regret, guilt, loss of self-respect and self-esteem, lack of trust and fear of commitment, rage, depression and suicide, ruined relationships, negative effects on sexual intimacy in marriage, infidelity in marriage, and lack of personal development.

What are some of the negative effects of premarital sex on marital intimacy?

Two effects are comparisons with or flashbacks of previous partners and lack of trust of your spouse (e.g., will my spouse stay faithful when faced with sexual temptation?).

[a]Quotes and Questions

The darkest hour is that before the dawn.—English proverb

How could this saying help you face a crisis pregnancy?

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.—Philippians 4:13

How can a person seek God's help in dealing with an unmarried pregnancy?

I have set before you life and death. . . . Choose life.—Deuteronomy 30:19

You knit me together in my mother's womb.—Psalm 139:13

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.—Jeremiah 1:5

What does God's Word tell us about life in the womb?

The only safe sex is in a marriage relationship where a man and a woman are faithful to each other for life. Don't settle for less than the best. Go for the gold.—

Scott Phelps

How would you feel if you had to tell your future husband or wife that you had a sexually transmitted disease?

How do we want our air? Pure. How do we want our water? Pure. How do we want sex on our wedding night? Pure.—Molly Kelly

Why do you want your future spouse to remain pure until your wedding night?

Infertility can be devastating to a marriage. If you hope to be a mother or a father some day, don't play around.—Dr. Joe McIlhaney, Medical Institute for Sexual Health

How can premarital sex make you unable to conceive a child?

There is no condom for the heart.

What does this statement mean to you?

A girl always knows when she's being used. She may try to deny it, but she knows.—

Crystalina Padilla

What would cause a person to deny what she knows—that she or he is being used?

Some teens think that sex is the unforgivable sin. Not true.—Fr. Dave Pivonka

Why do you think some teenagers believe sex is the unforgivable sin?

Even if you’ve been sexually active, it’s never too late to say no. You can’t go back, but you can go forward.—A. C. Green

What practical steps can a person take to move forward and make better choices in the area of sexuality?

[a]Group Activities

1. *Healing from an abortion.* In her book, *Standing With Courage*, Mary-Louise Kurey tells of “Allison,” a friend who got pregnant in college.

When her boyfriend’s mother found out, she was furious. She insisted that Allison get an abortion, and offered to pay for it herself. “I didn’t want to,” Allison said, “but she said if I didn’t, I couldn’t marry her son. So I did.”

Allison’s eyes filled up with tears. “And every night since that awful day, I lie in bed and hear that little baby’s voice crying out to me. That little baby wanted life. And I took it from him. And I hated myself so much for doing that that I tried to escape from my life and the awful person I was. One way I thought I could escape was food. I’d binge . . .

and sometimes make myself throw up. Finally, I couldn't take it any more
 . . . [She had a mental breakdown].²

In triads, discuss: What might have helped Allison resist the pressure to get an abortion? What would help her heal from her guilt and sorrow? (Check out Project Rachel's post-abortion ministry: www.marquette.edu/rachel)

2. *A video on life before birth.* Show a video on prenatal development (e.g., *Window to the Womb*, available from Project Reality, www.projectreality.org, tel.: 847-729-3298. *Share reactions.*

3. *Guest speaker on adoption.* Have a guest speaker who has experience with adoption (e.g., a staff worker from an adoption agency, a birth mother who has given her baby up for adoption, or a couple that has adopted a baby) Ask them to speak of the initial decisions and ongoing results. *Prepare written questions to ask the speaker.*

4. *What to say if you've got an STD.* Bill is engaged to be married, but he has just been diagnosed with genital herpes. His doctor tells him that even with treatment, there is a strong likelihood that he will eventually pass on this infection to his wife. *What should Bill say in breaking this news to his fiancée? Share your ideas with your group.*

5. *STD Fact Cards.* Make up a set of *STD Fact Cards* (using the facts below), one fact to a 3" x 5" card, and give one fact to each student. Go around the room, asking

students in turn to read the fact on their card without comment. The cumulative impact of this exercise is to convey the extent and consequences of sexually transmitted diseases. At the end, ask the students individually to write a completion to the following sentence, “*From listening to these facts I learned . . .*,” and have them share that with a partner and/or turn it in.

STD Fact Cards

1. Every 8 seconds, a teenager gets a sexually transmitted disease.
2. There are 15 million new cases of STDs in America each year. Most of these occur in people under 25.
3. One of three sexually active unmarried persons gets an STD by age 24.
4. Only the common cold is more common than sexually transmitted disease.
5. Until the mid-1970s, there were only two main STDs: syphilis and gonorrhea. Now there are more than 25.
6. The United States has the highest STD rate of any country in the industrialized world.
7. Most of the time when you have an STD, you have no visible symptoms.
8. According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, while condom use has increased most among teens, the spread of STDs has also increased most among teens.
9. The most common STD is human papilloma virus—5.5 million cases per year.
10. Untreated, human papilloma virus can cause cervical cancer, which kills nearly 5,000 women per year—more than are killed by AIDS.

11. Cervical cancer does not occur in girls who remain virgins before marriage.
12. An estimated 45-60 million Americans have genital herpes.
13. Bacterial STDs can be treated and cured, but viral STDs, such as HIV/AIDS and herpes, have no cure.
14. Health problems caused by STDs are more frequent and more severe in girls than boys.
15. The younger a girl is, the greater her chance of being infected by chlamydia, which can cause pelvic inflammatory disease.
16. With one infection of pelvic inflammatory disease a woman has a 25 percent chance of becoming infertile; a second infection, a 50 percent chance; a third infection, a 75 percent chance.
17. Most STDs can be passed from a mother to her baby before, during, or immediately after birth.
18. One out of five sexually active unmarried men and women has genital herpes, which cannot be cured.
19. STDs can be transmitted by any kind of genital contact, including oral sex.
20. Doctors have reported a significant rise in oral herpes among teens.
21. A person with one STD is at greater risk of getting another STD at the same time.
22. Using the birth control pill may increase a girl's chance of being infected by several STDs at the same time.

23. In one study, three-fourths of men who knew they had STDs said they had sex without telling their partners about their STDs.
24. A 2000 report by the National Institutes for Health reported that condoms provide no proven protection against six of the eight leading STDs.
25. STDs are usually transmitted through sex outside of marriage because unmarried partners don't know what the other person might be carrying.
6. *STD video.* Show a video on STDs (e.g., *Just Thought You Oughta Know—Teens Giving the Facts on Sex and STDs*, The Medical Institute, www.medinstitute.org; 800-892-9484). *Write down any new information you learn from the video.*
7. *Guest speaker.* Invite a guest speaker, such as a pro-chastity physician, nurse, or counselor, to talk about STDs and their experiences in helping people who have suffered their consequences. Ask them to address the problem of STD-caused infertility. *Write down questions for the speaker and listen to his or her responses.*
8. *Doubts about God.* A 16-year-old girl writes: “All the guys wanted to have sex with me, and I let a few of them get what they wanted. My self-esteem was totally gone. I felt that God had abandoned me. Then I finally decided that he didn't exist. If he did exist, how could he let my dad die, and how could he let no guy like me for me?”³
What advice would you give to someone who had these feelings? How is it possible to heal from the hurts caused by being sexually used? How is it possible to overcome

doubts about whether God loves you—or even whether he exists? Share your responses with others.

9. *Living life without regrets.* A young husband says: “I wish someone had been preaching abstinence in my ear when I was in high school. That’s when I started my sexual activity. I don’t even want to *think* about my college years. I wish I had saved this for my wife.” Another says, “When I make love with my wife, I think, ‘This girl could kiss better,’ or ‘This girl could do that better.’ I can’t get rid of the comparisons.” Both of these men have regrets. *Think about a regret that you have in your life. Share if you wish. What’s the best way to live a life without regrets?*

10. *Do the media always tell the truth?* Father Dave Pivonka writes: “Current movies portray sex between teens as wonderful and romantic. They should keep the film rolling when those same teens end up in my office crying as they tell me about the pain and depression caused by living an unchaste life.” Surveys have asked teens, “Do you think television and the movies portray sex realistically—the way it is in real life?” Some teens say yes, others say no. *What do you think? Brainstorm a list of the consequences of sex outside marriage, including emotional and spiritual consequences, that you think are usually left out of movies and other media portrayals. (Note to Leader: Consequences that are rarely depicted by the media include unmarried pregnancy, single-parent poverty, abortion and its aftermath, sexually transmitted diseases, infertility, and emotional hurts such as regret, lowered self-esteem, guilt, and feeling abandoned by God.)*

11. Sex, depression, and suicide. The medical journal *Pediatrics* (February 1991) reports: Among twelve- to sixteen-year-old girls, the attempted suicide rate is six times higher for girls who have had sexual intercourse than for those who are virgins. Premarital sexual activity can also lead guys to get depressed and be vulnerable to feelings of suicide. An eighteen-year-old guy writes:

When I was in middle school, I fell into sins against chastity. It went on for about two years. I tried to stop but couldn't until I went to a Steubenville youth conference in 1997. I was so deeply moved by the talks that I gave my life to Jesus and went to confession . . . But then the school year came around, and I fell into sin again. There were times when I'd be cutting up a magazine, and I'd look at the scissors and think about suicide.

In 1999 I went to Steubenville again. . . . At the men's session, the speaker asked the participants to share what things we had struggled with. A sin would be mentioned, and then all the guys who had struggled with that sin would raise their hands. But there was one thing no one mentioned—depression and suicide. I raised my hand and murmured “depression and suicide.” Every guy in the tent was silent. Then a number of hands went up. I was not alone.

It was quite a turnaround. I was no longer the unchaste, vain, and somewhat suicidal jerk I had been. I was now a guy who wanted to be a

saint. I spent 20 minutes in confession on Friday. . . . I was broken, and God put me together as a whole new person.⁴

Why might sex outside marriage lead to feelings of depression and even suicidal impulses? What should you do if you slip and fall—like the person in this story—despite your good intentions?

[a]Individual Assignments

1. *How to help a friend choose life.* A friend tells you she is pregnant and is considering getting an abortion. *What could you say or do to try to help her choose a life-affirming alternative?* (Check out the crisis pregnancy web sites listed below.)
2. *Internet research.* Do Internet research on groups that help persons facing a crisis pregnancy (e.g., www.nurturingnetwork.org www.birthright.org) or support groups for women who have had an abortion (e.g., www.marquette.edu/rachel). *Write a report and share with others something interesting or valuable that you learned.*
3. *Respect life.* Visit a pro-life web site (for example, www.whyife.org). *Develop a plan for something you would be willing to do to promote respect for life.*
4. *Crisis pregnancy center.* Visit a crisis pregnancy center and interview a staff worker. (“*Who comes to the center? How do you try to help them? What do you find fulfilling about this work?*”)

5. *STD poster.* Make a poster listing facts about STDs (such as those on the STD Fact Cards) and display it where other young people will see it.

6. *Youth retreat.* Attend a youth retreat where you make a good confession, ask God to heal past hurts, seek to deepen your relationship with God and make a new plan for your life.

[a]Prayer Starters

- “Lord, give me the courage to respect and defend the gift of life.”
- “Lord, grant me the wisdom to help my friend handle this pregnancy.”
- Pray the Rosary for unborn babies, unwed parents, and an end to abortion.
- “Lord, help me to respect the gift of my body.”
- “Lord, give me the courage to witness to the truth.”
- “Lord, I give all my regrets to you. Please heal my broken heart and help me to start over.”
- “Jesus, forgive me for my sins and help me to forgive myself.”
- “Mary, please pray for me. Help me to stay close to you and to seek your help when I face difficult situations.”

[ch]Part 3 “Safe Sex” and Other Popular Misconceptions

[a]Main Messages

- Condoms don’t make sex physically safe. The only sure way to avoid all STDs is to abstain from all forms of genital sexual activity outside marriage.
- All forms of sexual intimacy are meant for marriage. Saving sex for marriage means saving *all* of it for marriage.
- Sex belongs to marriage. You’re either married or you’re not. Part of the joy of marriage is learning to love each other sexually.
- In all areas of sexual behavior, there is a standard of right and wrong. That standard is defined by respect for self and others and the two-fold purpose of sex: the expression of marital love and the creation of new life within marriage.
- Only heterosexual marriage can fulfill God’s two purposes for sex: the expression of committed love in a sexually complementary relationship and the creation of new life. Homosexual sex is wrong because it cannot fulfill these two purposes. Homosexual persons, just like unmarried heterosexuals, are called to live chastely by abstaining from sex.

[a]FAQs

Do condoms prevent the transmission of STDs?

No. According to the 2000 National Institutes of Health report, condoms reduce but don’t eliminate the risk of HIV/AIDS; they provide some protection against gonorrhea for men but no protection for women; and they provide *no proven protection* against other major STDs such as chlamydia, human papilloma virus, and herpes. With some

STDs such as herpes and human papilloma virus, condoms don't prevent their transmission because the germs that cause the disease can infect anywhere in the genital region, only part of which is covered by the condom. With other STDs such as HIV/AIDS and chlamydia that are transmitted by sexual fluids, it's not as clear why condoms fail. Possible explanations: The man's semen may spill over the rim of the condom, or the woman's secretions may transmit the germs.

Why is passionate kissing and sexual touching before marriage wrong?

Passionate kissing and sexual touching before marriage are wrong because they undermine self-control, they tempt you to go farther the next time, and all forms of sexual passion are meant for the sexual love that belongs to married people.

What's signs of affection are acceptable before marriage?

Light kissing (not prolonged) and brief hugs are acceptable signs of affection before marriage. Do these to show affection, not to seek sexual arousal. When you set strict limits, you won't find yourself fighting the temptation to go a little bit farther the next time.

What's wrong with having sex or living together if you're planning to get married?

There are several things wrong: For example, you can still get pregnant; you can still get hurt if the relationship breaks up (eight out of ten live-in relationships do); if you have a baby and the relationship breaks up, the child will not have the two unified and

committed parents that every child deserves. The total giving of bodies in sex is meant to be part of the total marriage commitment.

What is the relationship between living together and divorce?

Living together before marriage significantly *increases* the chances of divorce if the couple eventually marries. One reason is that sexual involvement before marriage may keep a couple from getting to know each other. After the marriage, differences in values and goals come to the surface and cause conflicts.

Why isn't it necessary to "test out" your partner sexually before marriage?

Having sex before marriage won't tell you whether you'll be sexually compatible after marriage. It may mislead you. Sexual compatibility is something you *create* in your marriage by loving, guiding, and helping each other.

Why is masturbation wrong?

Masturbation violates both purposes of sex: There is no union of persons and no possibility of new life.

Why is pornography wrong?

Pornography debases sex by taking something beautiful and holy and making it dirty. It offends human dignity by treating persons as sex objects. It quickly becomes addictive, often leads to masturbation, and lowers our self-respect.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is any form of unwelcome sexual behavior. Such behavior shows disrespect for others. All persons have a right to be free from any form of sexual harassment.

What is the best way to guard against date rape?

To guard against date rape, women should not date someone they don't know and trust; not be alone in a potentially dangerous situation; and not allow anyone to put their hands where they don't belong. If you have been raped, seek counseling and support for reporting this crime, and pray for healing.

What should you do if you've been the victim of sexual abuse?

If you have been a victim of sexual abuse, do not blame yourself, do get counseling, and pray for healing.

What causes a person to have a homosexual orientation?

Homosexual orientation may be caused by a number of factors including genetic disposition, family upbringing, peer relations, and one's personal sexual history.

Is having a homosexual orientation wrong?

No. Only acting on this orientation by engaging in homosexual sexual activity is wrong.

How is it possible to live a chaste life as a homosexual?

The only way to be happy is to try to do God's will, however difficult that may be. Many homosexuals live chastely with the help of God's grace. Homosexual persons may enjoy friendship and intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intimacy with other persons. The one form of intimacy they must refrain from is sexual intimacy. The same is true for single heterosexual persons.

How should we treat homosexual persons?

We should treat homosexuals with the same love, justice, and respect that God wants us to show everyone, and support them in leading a chaste life.

[a]Quotes and Questions

If you can control yourself sexually, you can control yourself. Period.—A. C. Green

What are some other areas of life where you can control your desires?

Treat your date with the respect and purity you hope your future spouse will have. Keep in mind how you will expect a young man to treat your daughter one day. By listening to your conscience in this way, you'll have a good idea of where to draw the line.—Jason Evert

What would help a guy to treat a girl, or a girl to treat a guy, with this kind of respect?

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. . . . Therefore glorify God in your body.—1 Corinthians 6:19

What does it mean to you to “glorify” God in your body?

If your heart says, “Maybe I shouldn’t be doing this,” listen to your heart, pray for strength, and get out of the situation immediately.—Jason Evert

How can prayer help when you’re experiencing sexual temptation?

Sex is not an entitlement. It’s a privilege that goes with marriage.—Father Dave Pivonka

Why do some people believe that sex *is* an entitlement before marriage?

The ultimate intimacy belongs within the ultimate commitment.—Julia Duin

What makes marriage the ultimate commitment and the only place where sex belongs?

For this is the will of God . . . that you abstain from fornication.—1 Thessalonians 4:3

Why is it God’s will that we abstain from fornication (premarital sex)?

If it’s love, love waits.—pamphlet on sexuality

Why does true love wait for marriage?

If you own pornography of any kind, for the love of your future spouse, trash it immediately.—Jason Evert

How could pornography affect your relationship with your future spouse?

Everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her.

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.—Matthew 5:29

How does this teaching of Jesus apply to pornography?

If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.—

Matthew 6:15

How can God help us to forgive even deep hurts?

Have you not heard that from the beginning the Creator “made them male and female” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”?—Matthew 19:4-5

How is this Scripture related to the Church’s teaching on homosexuality?

With God all things are possible.—Matthew 19:26

How will God give us the grace to live chastely, no matter how hard that is? How can we seek that grace?

[a]Group Activities

1. *How to share the truth about STDs.* Somebody says to you,, “I’m not going to get an STD—we’re using protection [a condom].” *Share some facts you could cite to help this person realize that condoms do not provide adequate protection against STDs.*

2. *How to keep from “just doing it”*. A 20-year-old girl writes: “A few years ago, my boyfriend and I were in a really passionate moment. And we decided we would just do it. I don’t know . . . it just kind of happened.”⁵ *What’s the best way to avoid these types of situations and prevent sex from “just happening”?* Discuss with the group.
3. *What advice would you give?* A high school girl writes: “In my sophomore year I had a huge crush on David, and he knew it. Every weekend we would get high at his house and then fool around. But I was depressed because I couldn’t get him to go out with me or talk to me at school. My best bud was messing around with one of David’s friends. One of our friends asked us how we could stand to mess around with a guy we really liked and then have him completely ignore us at school. We both said, ‘You get used to it.’ And you do. You get numb to the pain.”⁶ *Form pairs. Individually, each write a short letter (one-paragraph) to this girl offering what you think might be helpful advice. Then read each other’s letters and comment on something about your partner’s letter that you liked.*
1. *Staying chaste*. Fr. Dave Pivonka writes: “Chastity is much more than ‘not having sex.’ You can refrain from sex and still be unchaste by looking at pornography, wearing skimpy clothes, or giving in to masturbation, heavy petting, passionate making out, or oral sex. Chastity is an attitude, a way of living. It’s recognizing your dignity as a son or a daughter of God and respecting the gift of your sexuality. It’s a way of honoring God because you honor the way he made you.”⁷ *What enables a*

person to live a chaste lifestyle? What can you do to keep clear of situations that might lead you into unchaste actions? Make a list of ideas and share with a partner or in a small group.

5. *What would you say? You have a close friend who says, “We just got engaged, but we’re going to live together to make sure we’re compatible.” Knowing what you do about this issue, what could you say to encourage your friend to reconsider this decision? What do you think you would say to your own child if he or she planned to move in with someone? Share your thoughts with the group.*

6. *How can you stop sexual harassment? Ted has been making sexual remarks to Karen, in a joking way, as he passes her in the school halls and sometimes when they’re in a group with other people. She acts as if it doesn’t bother her, but it does and she wishes he would stop. What should she do? List three options. Then share your options with a partner or in a group.*

7. *How can you prevent date rape? According to one survey, one in four college women say they have been the victims of an attempted date rape. What can college women do to keep this from ever happening to them? What should you do if you find yourself in a dating situation where somebody is trying to force sexual intimacy on you? List and share three options.*

1. *What would you say to a younger sibling?* Statistics tell us that more and more teens are using oral sex as a substitute for intercourse. *Imagine if a younger sibling knew that you were involved in that practice. How would you feel? Write down your thoughts in a journal.*
2. *Set limits on physical affection.* Decide now on the limits you will practice regarding physical affection on dates—and how you will communicate to another, verbally and non verbally, what your limits are.
3. *Make a plan for regaining control.* If you've fallen into unchaste behavior of any kind, make a specific plan for how you will avoid it in the future. As part of your plan, include the sacrament of Reconciliation.
4. *Break free of masturbation.* Paul Fox, M. D., writes: "Masturbation is centered on the self. For this reason, it is spiritually unhealthy at every stage of development."

Dr. Fox explains why masturbation is unhealthy both before and during marriage: "The adolescent who masturbates prior to marriage demonstrates a selfish impatience as well as an obsession with sexual gratification. But masturbation is even more harmful in marriage, where it attenuates the physical attraction between husband and wife. To have a joyous sexual experience with one's spouse takes time, tenderness, patience, and humor. Masturbation, by comparison, is easy: There is the urge, there is the act." Both before and after marriage, Dr. Fox explains, "the urge to masturbate becomes strongest when the heart is empty or troubled: when one is bored,

dissatisfied, lonely, angry, or restless. Masturbation provides an easy escape from these discontents, yet the release it gives is purely temporary and the emptiness afterwards more profound than ever.”⁸

Dr. Fox speaks from personal experience. He says he became enslaved to the habit of masturbating as a teenager and then carried that habit into his marriage, where it drove a wedge between him and his wife. He writes: “What enabled me to break the bonds of this enslavement was acknowledging that masturbation is a sin, confessing it to my wife and spiritual counselors, and turning to Christ for the power to break with it.”

If you have gotten involved with masturbation, turn now to the healing forgiveness offered by Christ. Then make a plan for how you will try, with God’s grace, to avoid this sin in the future. As part of your plan, include a time for daily prayer. You and God can conquer this. DON’T GIVE UP.

5. *Break free of pornography.* Jason Everet says, “Pornography is the perfect way to ruin your future marriage.” If you’ve gotten involved with any form of pornography, turn to the power of Jesus and prayer as the way to break free of this sin. *Confess your sins in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Throw away all of your printed pornography now. Avoid the Internet altogether for a number of days or weeks. If you slip back, repeat these steps. God’s power is stronger than the grip of pornography. DON’T GIVE UP.*
6. *Seek healing from hurt.* Consider these Scriptures: “Many people followed him, and he healed them all” (Mt 12:15). “Come to me all you who are burdened, and I will give you

rest” (Mt 11:28). *If you have been hurt by another person (sexually or otherwise), ask Jesus to heal your hurt and lift whatever burdens you carry.*

7. *What could you say?* A friend or sibling tells you that they think they might be gay. *How could you help that person to live the life God wants them to live? What do you think Jesus would want you to do (and how could you seek his help to do it?) Write your responses as a journal entry.*

8. *Counterpoint.* The next time someone uses a derogatory term for homosexuals, signal your disapproval in some way *(either by saying something or walking away).*

9. *Official teaching.* What does the Church teach about homosexuality? *Research more about what the Church teaches by reading in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, sections 2357-59.*

[a]Prayer Starters

- “Holy Spirit, strengthen my self-control.”
- “I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.”
- “Mary, keep me pure.”
- “Lord, give me the humility to do your will, not mine.”
- “Holy Spirit, give me the wisdom to know how to witness.”
- “Blessed Mother, guard my purity.”
- “Guardian Angel, protect me from temptation today.”

- “Holy Spirit, give me the courage not to tolerate disrespectful treatment—toward myself or others.”
- “Jesus, heal me and make me whole.”
- “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.” (prayer of St. Francis)
- Pray that all people with have a deeper conversion to Christ.

[ch]Part 4 Creating a Vision

[a]Main Messages

- God created sex. It's his beautiful gift to us. He restricts the use of that gift to marriage because he loves us—because marriage is the one relationship in which sexual intimacy produces happiness.
- Chastity is the virtue that enables us to use the gift of sex according to God's plan, which reserves all sexual intimacy for marriage. Chastity is a positive lifestyle—a deliberate decision to embrace purity of mind, heart, and body and to let that show in all of our actions. The way to live chastely is to keep in mind the many benefits of chastity, avoid temptation, and continually pray for God's help to remain pure and to be a positive influence on others.
- Sex in marriage has two purposes: expressing a couple's love for each other and creating new life. The secret of a happy and lasting marriage is commitment—a decision to love and honor each other “for better and for worse, till death do us part.”

[b]FAQs

How do we know God's plan for sex?

We know from the Church's teaching that sex is meant for marriage. Jesus gave the Church absolute authority to teach about faith and morals when he said to St. Peter: “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:19). We also know about God's plan for sex from the Bible, which, along with the Holy Spirit, guides the Church in what it teaches. The Bible

clearly teaches that God reserves sex for marriage and that outside marriage sexual intimacy is a serious sin. Jesus names “fornication” (sex between unmarried persons), along with “theft, murder, and adultery,” as “evils that come from within and defile” a person (Mk 7:18-23). St. Paul tells us that it is God’s will that we “abstain from fornication” (1Thes 4:3).

How can we be holy?

We can be holy by staying close to God through the sacraments (especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation) and personal prayer. You can’t have a relationship with somebody that you never communicate with. Prayer is talking to God and also listening to God speak to you in your heart and mind. God gives us *grace*—his life in us—when we draw close to him in prayer. Grace gives us the strength to resist the temptations from the devil, the world, and our own human weakness. God will help us learn to pray if we sincerely make the effort.

Who is called to be chaste?

Everyone—both single people and married people. For *unmarried* persons, chastity means staying pure in thought and deed and refraining from all forms of sexual intimacy. For *married* persons, chastity means being faithful to one’s spouse and keeping married sex open to the gift of life. For *religious*—persons who are called to be priests brothers, or nuns—chastity is the vow of life-long celibacy for the love of God.

How is chastity different from virginity?

Virginity is a physical condition; chastity is a moral choice—a spiritual state. If you fall into unchaste behavior, you can regain your chastity at any time.

What are the benefits of chastity?

The benefits of chastity include freedom from: worry and guilt, sexual pressure on dates, using people or being used, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, STDs, loss of reputation, and the ghosts of past relationships invading your marriage. More benefits are freedom to: develop self-respect, exercise control over your life, pursue your goals, develop real friendships, find the right person to marry, avoid sexual sin, and grow closer to God.

How can you be successful in leading a chaste lifestyle?

You can lead a chaste life by practicing modesty and wise dating strategies (delay single dating and date only people who share your values), choosing friends who value chastity, and making a formal promise to remain pure. Also, stay close to God through prayer, trust him to help you find the right person to marry if that's your vocation, and ask his help in starting over if you make a mistake.

What makes for a good sex life in marriage?

A good sex life in marriage has two main components: (1) each partner unselfishly putting the other first, trying to please the other in love; and (2) developing a strong and loving marriage.

What makes for a happy and lasting marriage?

A happy and lasting marriage comes from a mutual commitment to the permanence of marriage, believing that marriage is a sacrament with Christ at the center, putting the love of your spouse before all except God, sharing and communicating, working out problems, remaining faithful to your marriage vows, forgiving generously, praying regularly, and raising a family.

How can a couple plan a family?

A couple can plan a family through Natural Family Planning (NFP), which uses the woman's natural fertility cycle to achieve a pregnancy or postpone one. Unlike artificial contraception (e.g., the pill, using a condom, having a vasectomy), NFP respects God's "two-in-one" plan for sex: the deepening of marital love and the procreation of children. NFP is not "substitute contraception" but must always be practiced prayerfully, seeking God's guidance on whether and when to have another child.

What are the benefits of NFP?

Used correctly, NFP is 98 percent effective. Also, there are no health risks, as there are with some artificial methods of contraception; the couple's communication about their sex life improves, along with their commitment to their marriage (the divorce rate for couples using NFP is only 1.3 percent). Couples using NFP remain open to God's prompting regarding more children and they enjoy the peace of conscience that comes from following the Church's teaching.

What is the secret of a happy life?

The same as the secret of a happy marriage: love. It's not the emotions of romantic love, but the love that is an act of the will, that sacrifices for the sake of others—the kind of love that Jesus has for us.

[b]Quotes and Questions

The world doesn't want you to be chaste, but God does.—Father Dave Pivonka

Chastity of the body is not enough. We must also practice chastity of thought, desire, and heart. Jesus insists on this interior purity.—Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalene, O. C. D.

How can we protect our inner purity?

Purity is the fruit of prayer.—Mother Teresa

Why do you think Mother Teresa says this?

If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love.—John 15:10

What has sometimes kept you from seeking God's forgiveness and peace in the sacrament of Reconciliation?

Lying next to your boyfriend or girlfriend without a stitch of clothing on is not the time to discuss chastity. The time to think about chastity is now—when your thinking is clear.—Father Dave Pivonka

When would be the best time to share your views on chastity with a boyfriend or girlfriend?

God is everywhere, so don't ask him to step out of the room for a few minutes during the end of a date.—Jason Evert

How can we help ourselves be aware of God's constant presence?

The absence of any prayer life will so weaken the spiritual life that it will be unable to meet the onslaughts of a pagan world.—Father Hugh Thwaites

Why is prayer an essential source of spiritual strength?

If by how you dress, you are saying to guys, "Hey, look at my body," why would a guy want to get to know *you*?—Jason Evert

What does dressing modestly communicate to another person?

God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth."—Genesis 1:28

Whoever welcomes one little child . . . for my sake, welcomes me.—Matthew 18:5

Reflect on and explain the kind of parent you imagine yourself being some day.

The way to plan the family is Natural Family Planning, not contraception. In loving, the husband and wife must turn the attention to each other, as happens in natural family planning, and not to self, as happens in contraception.—Mother Teresa

How would faithful openness to welcoming children be a blessing to a marriage?

[b]Group Activities

1. *How to pray.* Mike says: “I’ve tried to pray, but I don’t get anywhere. I think about a million things—everything but God. It seems like a waste of time.” *What advice would you give Mike? What’s a way of praying that’s worked for you? Share your responses with a partner or in a small group.*

2. *Losing faith, finding faith.* People of all ages go through periods of doubt concerning their faith. Making wrong decisions in the area of sexuality can add to those doubts.

Consider the following story:

I grew up in a Catholic family, the youngest of six children. My mother and father are very religious and taught us all about the Church. Yet, I felt as if everything I was told was basically a fairy tale. I got into the party scene where I would get drunk, do drugs, and sleep with guys without thinking twice about it. I got to the point where I didn’t want to live anymore—so I tried to kill myself.

That was my history prior to the Steubenville of the Rockies youth conference. On Saturday night after adoration, I went to confession and told the priest everything. He told me I was like a newly baptized child and then said to me, “Kim, always remember that God loves you no matter what.” For the first time I truly felt the presence of Jesus Christ, and I accepted Jesus into my heart.

Have you ever struggled with doubts about your faith—perhaps even the loss of your faith in God? How have you tried to deal with that? What would you suggest to someone who is going through this kind of struggle? Share your responses to these questions with others in your group.

3. *How to be our “brother’s keeper”?* A young woman in her twenties writes: “I stood by silently and watched two close friends wreck their lives because of the wrong decisions about sex. One got pregnant, struggled to raise her child, and had to give up her dreams of college. The other got pregnant, had an abortion, and had a mental breakdown from the guilt. When I saw how much they were suffering, I prayed for them—but also for myself. My previous silence on chastity no longer seemed to be ‘tolerant’ and ‘open-minded.’ It was actually cowardly and selfish—taking good care of myself while letting them risk their sexuality, their spirituality, and their futures. Might I have made a difference if I had said something? Shouldn’t I have at least tried? I no longer subscribe to the idea that people who speak out about chastity are trying to ‘force their ideas’ on others. I *am* my brother’s keeper.”⁹

There’s a well-known slogan, “Friends don’t let friends drink and drive”—because drinking and driving can maim and kill, and you shouldn’t let that happen to someone you care about. If bad sexual choices can also wreck a life, what is our moral responsibility when we see people we care about hurting themselves in this way? Jesus tells us not to “judge others”—meaning not to judge their guilt before God (only God sees the soul). But if we love others as God loves us, we’ll want what is best for them. *If you had a friend who was sexually involved or thinking of getting involved, what could you say or do to try*

to influence him or her to consider making a different decision—without coming off as prudish or judgmental? Individually, write at least one thing you could say. Then share them with your group.

4. *Temptation-free fun.* Jason Evert writes: “Most of the battle lies in avoiding occasions of sin. Mistakes can be prevented if a couple avoids the situations where sexual sins often happen—the back seat of a car or being alone together at home, in a dark room, or on a bed.” A college guy says, “You might want to be alone, like at one of your houses when the parents aren’t home, but don’t—the temptation is too much.” *In triads, make a list of ten ways guys and girls can have fun together—and even romance—that won’t create sexual temptation. The list can include things to do as a couple and things to do as a group. Share your list of ideas with the whole group.*

5. *How to make a marriage last?* A growing body of research finds many benefits of marriage for both husbands and wives. According to these studies, married people: (1) have more fulfilling sex lives than unmarried people; (2) are healthier physically and mentally; (3) live longer than people who are divorced or separated; and (4) are less prone to suicide.

A growing body of research also finds that children and teenagers who grow up in an intact marriage, with the father in the home, are more likely to: (1) do well in school; (2) achieve a higher level of education; (3) avoid being suspended or expelled from school; (4) stay free of drug abuse; (5) avoid teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, running away, and suicide; and (6) have generally better physical and

emotional health than children who do not grow up with their biological fathers.¹⁰

Dr. Judith Wallerstein, in a review of the long-term effects of divorce on children, reports that more than 50 percent of children whose parents divorced when they were young, were still, 10 years after the divorce, frequently angry, critical of themselves, achieving below their potential, and anxious about what would happen to them.¹¹

Imagine you are married. Given your marriage vow before God to stay together through good times and bad, and given all you know about the benefits of marriage for both spouses and children, what can you do to make your marriage last?

Learning how to argue constructively? forgiving quickly? agreeing on a common approach to raising children? agreeing on how to manage money? never going to sleep angry? In triads, make a list of what you think are the five most important things a couple can do—with your reasons. Then, list two things you could do to save your marriage if you were having a major problem. Finally, share what you came up with in the larger group.

6. *Guest speakers.* Invite a married couple who have been faithful to the Church's teachings about sexuality. Ask them to talk about the benefits of saving sex for marriage, the why and how of Natural Family Planning, and tips for making a marriage work. *Use 3" x 5" cards to write questions that can be asked of the couple.*

7. *Contraception, Why Not.* Show Professor Janet Smith's video, *Contraception, Why Not* (75 min., \$20, available from *One More Soul*, 1-800-307-7685, www.OMSoul.com). Widely acclaimed as the best, most complete presentation on

the beauty of children and the harms of contraception. *After viewing the video complete three sentences: (1) From Dr. Smith's video I learned . . . (2) After watching this video, I think . . . (3) A question I have is. . . . Share your completed sentences with others.*

8. *NFP video.* View a video that explains Natural Family Planning; for example, *Life Is a Gift* by Ann Moell, M. D. on the benefits of NFP over contraception; and *Love and Fertility* by Mercedes Wilson on the mucus-only Billings method of NFP. Both available from *One More Soul*. *Prepare questions based on the material in the video and seek answers from a couple that practices NFP.*

9. *What makes a good mate?* There are many qualities that make a good mate. For example, sense of humor, strong faith, forgiving, desire to have and raise children, interested in sharing activities, able to communicate and listen, willing to solve problems, hard worker, kind, patient, trustworthy, understanding, humble, respectful, positive attitude, never gives up. *Individually (without talking), list—in order of importance—what you think are the six most important qualities in making someone a good husband and father, or a good wife and mother. In small groups, compare your lists and share your reasons for listing what you did. As a follow-up, circle the three qualities on your list of six that you believe you are relatively strong in. Star the three qualities where you have the most room for improvement. Make a plan for how, during the next week, you will strive to get better in one of the character qualities*

where you have room for growth. Share your plan with a partner. After a week, share how you did.

[b]Individual Assignments

1. *Use your spiritual weapons.* Jason Evert writes, “Chastity isn’t possible without grace. You want grace? For starters, it’s helpful each day to pray three Hail Mary’s for purity of body, mind, and heart. Also, go to Mass and confession, pray the Rosary, read the Bible, go before the Blessed Sacrament, find a holy friend or priest with whom you can talk, and try to surround yourself with good friends. If we don’t pick up these weapons in the fight and yet complain that purity is too difficult, it’s as though we sit on a pile of bazookas, grenades, and missiles while waving a white flag of surrender. We are by no means helpless.”¹² *Make a list of things you’ve done—or want to do—to try to gain the grace to stay pure. Write down one thing you will actually do in the next 24 hours.*

2. *Make time for morning prayer.* St. John Vianney writes: “At the beginning of the day God has the necessary grace for the day ready for us. He knows exactly what opportunities we shall have to sin and will give us everything we need if we ask him then. That is why the devil does all he can to prevent us from saying our morning prayers or to make us say them badly.” *Set aside a prayer time—even just five minutes—at the start of your day. Read a passage from the Bible or another spiritual book (e.g., meditations on the daily Mass readings) to focus your thoughts. Talk to Jesus conversationally, as if he were right there— which he is. Tell him what’s in*

your heart. Ask him for whatever help you need. If you miss your daily prayer time, don't give up; just get back to your prayer time the next day. Keep going until you make this a habit, like brushing your teeth or taking a shower.

3. *Confession.* Make a good confession. If you haven't been to Confession in a while, you may not be sure what to say. Tell the priest this, and he'll guide you through it.

4. *A youth retreat.* Go on a youth retreat where you ask Jesus and Mary to come into your heart and life. To check out Father Dave Pivonka's *Rocked By God* retreats, visit www.ROCKEDBYGOD.com. Also visit www.youth2000.com for information on Youth 2000 retreats. Your diocesan youth ministry office can also refer you to annual or biannual retreats.

5. *Sharing the faith.* Share your faith with another person. Share ways God has helped you and ways you're trying to be closer to him. Faith grows stronger when it's shared.

6. *The power of modesty.* One speaker says, "I never learned how to treat a girl until I dated someone in college who dressed modestly. She was *interesting*. She commanded respect."¹³ *"Why is modesty an important part of a chaste lifestyle—for both guys and girls? Is there more to modesty than just dress? How can modesty make a person more attractive than dressing or acting immodestly? Write a short essay that addresses these questions.*

7. *What's your game plan?* A. C. Green, the NBA Lakers basketball star known for his public stance on virginity, said: "I always have a choice to make. If I see a woman or even a TV commercial, I don't have to look. I can treat women well even if they don't treat themselves well. They can call my room, but the same hand that picks up the phone can hang it up. I exercise my power of choice to keep control of my own body, my own life." A. C. also recognized that we sometimes make bad choices and then need to make a plan for "getting back in the game." Here are five steps he recommends:

- **Make a commitment to start over.** List the reasons you are choosing to change.
- **Find out who your teammates are.** Find friends who will support you and not pressure you.
- **Communicate.** Tell the people you date about your commitment and how you plan to stick to it.
- **Stay within the boundaries.** Set limits on your behavior so you don't go too far physically.
- **Focus on your future.** When abstinence gets difficult, remember your future goals and the reasons you have chosen to wait.¹⁴

Write out a personal game plan—either for getting back in the game, or for avoiding mistakes in the first place.

8. *Pure Love Promise.* Read the following pledge to chastity:

Believing that sex is sacred, I promise God that I will save the gift of my sexuality from now until marriage. I choose to glorify God with my body and pursue a life of purity, trusting that the Lord is never outdone in generosity.

As a help in living chastely, commit to the Pure Love Promise¹⁵ and keep it where you'll see it each day.

9. *Conversion stories.* Share testimonies of persons who have had a conversion to the truth of Catholic teaching about keeping married sexuality open to life. One example:

My husband and I had a vasectomy after our third child was born. (We had three under the age of three.) We got pregnant with our third while using birth control. Our doctor told us we should not have any more, since I had already had three Cesarean sections. So reluctantly we took matters into our hands without praying about it and had the vasectomy. Everyone was sure we did the right thing but us. They said now you can get on with your life and not have the burden of more children. We accepted this as the norm even among Christians.

Later I heard of someone who had a vasectomy reversal. We couldn't afford it, and besides our life was getting easier, no more diapers But God kept prodding our hearts, and we finally had the vasectomy reversed. I still hadn't been convinced that contraception was wrong. I searched the Scriptures and found NOTHING that promotes birth control anywhere. All I

found was TONS of Scripture backing up the blessings of children and how we can make disciples for Christ. We got pregnant one month after the reversal—what a joy. But after our little blessing was born, we tried to practice contraception again but felt convicted every time. Finally my husband said, “Let’s just give this over to God.” Our “reversal” baby is now 17 months old and I am not pregnant yet, but I now desire another blessing if the Lord wills it for our lives. I never thought I would be open to all the children he has for us. I hope this may encourage others who have struggled with this issue.¹⁶

Research and report on similar testimonies. One More Soul’s website (www.Omsoul.com) and newsletter One More Soul Update are excellent sources of these types of stories.

*10. Health hazards of contraception and abortion. Listen to an audio tape on the health dangers of contraception and abortion. We recommend *Breast Cancer, Abortion, and the Pill*, in which Dr. Chris Kahlenborn explains the health consequences of the birth control pill and abortion, including thousands of cancer deaths yearly. Available from *One More Soul*. (An *NFP-Only Physicians Directory*, listing more than 400 doctors who practice medicine completely in accord with Catholic teaching, is also available.) Write a report on the information you gleaned from the tape.*

11. Work on your character. Develop a personal game plan for finding the special person you hope to marry (if you think that’s your vocation). Do this by focusing on the kind

of person you'd like to marry—and then becoming that kind of person yourself. *Write ways you can start putting your plan into practice now.*

12. *Research NFP.* Do Internet research on the benefits of Natural Family Planning and the harm caused by contraception (e.g., www.OMSoul.com and www.ccli.org). *Write a report on your findings.*

13. *Write to your future spouse.* Write a letter to your future husband or wife—about how you're waiting for them, how you hope they're waiting for you, and the hopes and dreams you have for your marriage.

[a]Prayer Starters

- *Pray to know your vocation.* God has created each of us to know, love, and serve him. We do this in different ways. Ask God to help you find your vocation in life—what he is calling *you* to. There are three general vocations: marriage, the life of a priest or religious, or serving God as a single person. Within those vocations, there is also the particular work or service God has in mind for you—that will use the special gifts he has given you (everyone has these gifts even if we don't always recognize them at first). Pray the meditation of Cardinal Newman:

God has created me to do some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. He has not created me for nothing. He knows what he is about. He may take away my friends, he may throw me among strangers, he may make me feel desolate, he may

hide my future from me—still he knows what he is about. Therefore I will trust him.

- *Morning Offering*: “Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you all my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sins, reunion of all Christians, and the intentions of the Holy Father. Amen.”
- *Prayer to avoid temptation*: “When you feel tempted by the sight of another, say a quick prayer in your heart to Jesus, Mary, or St. Joseph, asking for the strength to be pure. Ask also that that person be blessed by Christ. These little acts of renunciation will help you to conquer your tougher temptations and will get you in the habit of leading others to Jesus.”¹⁷
- *Prayer of the sinner*: “Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in your great tenderness, wipe away my offense; wash away all my guilt; from my sin cleanse me” (Psalm 51:3-4).
- *Prayer of St. Patrick*: “Christ shield me this day: Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I arise.”

- *Prayer for Purity:* “Jesus, help me to love as you do. Make me pure of body, pure of mind, and pure of heart so that I might see God and enjoy his plan for me. Make me clean, and heal me from the wounds of sin. By myself I am weak, but in you I can be strong and holy. Mary, I want to be pure like you. St. Joseph, I want to have your courage to guard the purity of others and myself. Please help me in my walk with Jesus so I can glorify God in my body and join you in heaven one day.”¹⁸

- Spend some time with Jesus before the Blessed Sacrament, asking him to help you discern your vocation. Is God calling you to be a priest or religious? To marriage? To serve him as a single person?

- “St. Joseph, help me be chaste and love my future spouse as much as you loved Mary.”

- “Lord, help me to follow your plan for marriage and always be open to the gift of life.”

[ch]Notes

[footnotes should be moved to end note section at end of book]

¹ Mary-Louise Kurey, *Standing With Courage* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2002).

² Ibid.

³ Letter in Father Dave Pivonka's *Rocked By God* (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University Press, 2000).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kurey, *op. cit.*

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Pivonka, *op. cit.*

⁸ Paul C. Fox, "The sin in masturbation," *New Oxford Review* (June, 1996).

⁹ Adapted from Kurey, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Deborah Cole and Maureen Gallagher Duran, *Sex and character* (Richardson, TX: Foundation for Thought and Ethics, 1998).

¹¹ Judith S. Wallerstein, "The long-term effects of divorce on children: A review," *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 30, 1991.

¹² Jason Evert, *Pure love* (San Diego, CA: Catholic Answers, 1999).

¹³ Jason Evert, "What if we really love each other?", presentation at the Summer Institute in Character Education, SUNY Cortland, July 2002.

¹⁴ Scott Phelps and Libby Gray, *A. C. Green's Game Plan Abstinence Program* (distributed by Project Reality: www.ProjectReality.org)

¹⁵ Evert, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Michelle, "Happy reverse," *One More Soul Update* (Summer 2002).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.