

UNDER 21

# PREMARITAL SEX

**"Why does God give us beautiful bodies and sexual desires in our early teens just to slap our hands and say 'Not yet, Junior!'"? Let's take a look at the total picture to find our answer to that question.**

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"I can't see what's so wrong about making love. It seems really beautiful to me."

Sex *is* really beautiful. It's a terrific, exciting, and unique experience. The question isn't "What's wrong with making love?" it's "Why does God restrict this beautiful, natural act to the marriage relationship?"

Don't stop reading if you're already sexually active. I'm not

going to preach at you or waste your time repeating stories about the "terrible consequences" of premarital sex: VD, abortion, and eternal damnation. And I'm definitely not into guilt trips. In fact, before I continue, I think it's important to clear one thing up: *God does not have any particular hang-ups about sex!*

Despite what you and I may have been told by well-meaning

people, God does not hate sexual sin more than he hates other sins. As a matter of fact, the Bible has a lot more to say about idolatry (putting something or someone else before God) and neglecting the poor than about fornication and adultery. The Bible often lumps sexual sin together with what some people consider "less serious" sins such as gossip, gluttony, greed, jealousy, and lying.

On the other hand, I'm not going to pooh-poo this sin — it's one of the greatest problems we face. But it's unfair to God's loving plan to view sex as the *Worst* or *Unforgivable* sin.

## **"The Boss" who loves**

Right off, let's get one thing straight: God would not forbid something without cause! He is not an insecure or pompous tyrant, commanding his people to "Do as I say!" just to prove he's boss or to exercise his authority. He *is* boss and *has* all authority whether we obey him or not. God gives commandments for our own benefit. Therefore we have to believe he is thinking of our happiness and fulfillment when he asks us not to engage in premarital sex.

You're not alone if you're thinking, "But that doesn't make sense! Why does God give us beautiful bodies and sexual desires in our early teens just to slap our hands and say, 'Not yet, Junior'? That's not fulfillment — that's frustration!"

One way to view this objection is by analogy. Imagine you're four years old. Your mother makes hot cocoa for the family and sets a cup in front of you saying, "Wait a few minutes before you drink it. It's hot." She isn't trying to tempt you by setting the cup in front of you, she's complimenting you. She's saying, "I think you're old enough to understand what 'hot' means and to control your immediate desire to drink the cocoa." Or more to the point, "I think you're *mature* enough to decide for yourself when the cocoa is cool enough to drink."

Of course, your mom is taking a chance. You *might* ignore her in your eagerness to taste the cocoa, burn your tongue, and wail in agony the rest of the afternoon. But she has allowed you the freedom of choice, which is your dignity and God-given right as a human being. Would you argue that it would be better if she never set a hot dish or drink before you

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until she had personally checked that it was lukewarm? That would be pretty humiliating at age seventeen.

In the same way, would it be better if God did *not* allow our bodies to mature or our sexual desires to grow until *after* our wedding day? Of course not! He trusts us to be mature enough to deal with our feelings. We need to experience these desires to explore our sexuality, discover what we're attracted to in the opposite sex, and eventually choose a compatible marriage partner. And we need to practice controlling our sexual drive *before* marriage so it doesn't control *us* after marriage — and I don't just mean "not having affairs" either. I mean being mature enough to make love meaningfully and selflessly to a spouse who will sometimes need to be tenderly embraced after an exhausting day with the kids or patiently pampered after a long day at the office *before* having intercourse.

### Practice does not make perfect

Marriage is a very difficult thing to pull off today. Just take a look around, study the divorce rate. But most of us are still hopeful. We want to believe that marriage can be special, fulfilling, and even forever.

Of course, the rightness of marital sexuality is not the problem here, is it? The question was, is sexuality *only* for marriage?

What's wrong with premarital sexual experiences? We've been led to believe that sexual liberation means "doing it" whenever we feel like it. We may even think that not having intercourse when we feel like it will be harmful, "repressive."

Nothing could be further from the truth! A person who follows this line of thinking is in danger of becoming a slave of lust, a compulsive bed-hopper — just as habitual social drinkers become alcoholics and consistent over-eaters become gluttons. As St. Paul put it, "Everything is lawful for me" — but that does not mean that everything is good for me. 'Everything is lawful for me' — but I will not let myself be enslaved by anything. 'Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will do away with them both in the end' — but the body is not for immorality; it is for the Lord" (1 Cor 6:12,13).

I heard things in junior high and high school like "You have to *practice* making love. If you get experience now you'll be better in bed with your husband (or wife)." This is actually a lot of self-centered bull. Sexual "expertise" is more likely to hurt rather than impress a

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future spouse. There is nothing that can make a newlywed more tense or insecure than to feel he or she has to "measure up" to a spouse's experienced standards.

Sometimes the "experienced" spouse discovers that one partner cannot fulfill his or her indiscriminate sexual appetite. Intimacy — an ideal steadily weakened with every broken relationship or short-lived fling — is no longer an important part of lovemaking. Sex has become less an expression of love and more a relief of sexual tension.

Lovemaking is an art. Sure it involves practice, but it also involves discipline — and perfection means working with only the best and truest accompaniment. In this case, the truest accompaniment

for our performance can only be our chosen, permanent partner.

Our sexuality is a gift from God. It is a holy and unique gift that, when rightly exercised, unites us intimately and permanently to our spouse: "The two shall be made into one" (Eph 5:31). We are called to give ourselves totally and solely to our partner for life, just as "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25).

Our bodies can give us great sensual pleasure, but that's not their only purpose. Our bodies are meant to glorify God, and they miraculously enable us to share in his ongoing work of creation in the process.

God's idea of sexual union is wonderfully idealistic. Should we settle for anything else?

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