



GETTING THE MOST OUT OF SEX

Only for dreamers?

For Mathew Boggs, it was seeing his grandparents holding hands, fingers interlocked that helped him believe deep and lifelong love was possible. “Funny,” he thought, “all these years, and they’re still holding hands.” In the introduction to his book *Project Everlasting*, he continues:

In that moment, the couple before me became more than just my grandparents. I saw them as partners who had journeyed through a lifetime of challenge and struggle. Now at the end of their journey together, they were still crazy about each other. [...] How simple they made it seem! But to me it represented what I wanted most in the world. More than anything, I wanted to find the love they were living. My grandparents had been married sixty-three years, but it was not convention or habit that kept them together. Jack and Dorothy Manin were two people very much in love.

Many of us have probably had similar experiences. We’ve observed other couples’ happiness and their loving commitment to each other, and we’ve realized our own desire for someone whom we can love deeply and who will return that love to us.

But how do we get there? Unfortunately today, it seems examples of finding and holding onto love are few and far between. Divorce is all too common, and meanwhile, our peers prepare for marital un-commitment with premarital un-commitment. The possibility of being both in love and faithful to one person for a lifetime is dismissed as a dream.

But is it only a dream? Is a stable and happy marriage merely an ideal of the past? Or, are there more couples like Jack and Dorothy Manin, whose time-weathered love has only increased in strength, beauty, and devotion over the years? Many of us would dare to

affirm the latter. We’ve witnessed the marriages that have worked, and we’ve noticed a distinct pattern among them. Happiness and fulfillment in romantic relationships is possible. But **the key is preparing for faithfulness in marriage by practicing faithfulness while dating.** By this, we do not mean sexual faithfulness to one person after another. Instead, we mean practicing fidelity to your spouse even before knowing who that person is.

This is the essence of chastity.

Chastity: FOR, not against, sex

Contrary to some common assumptions, chastity and abstinence before marriage does not necessitate being irrationally religious, sexually repressed, afraid of the opposite sex, or afraid of sex in general. Rather, chastity is on the other side of the spectrum – it does not reflect a fear or denigration of sex, but rather **chastity honors sex and allows it to flourish to its full capacity.**

Sex and the “bonding” hormone

During sex (and, recent studies show, also during prolonged embraces or “cuddling”) the “bonding” hormone oxytocin is released in men and even more in women. This means that **there is no such thing as “casual” sex.** No matter how much people may desire to easily detach themselves or forget about the sexual intimacy they shared with another person, they are physiologically bonded to that person. This is why so many people, young women especially, feel abandoned, used, and empty when they get the sex without the personal commitment. In our biology, human sexuality is not designed for serial sexual

relationships. Rather, **our sexuality is meant for intimacy with one person.**

Freeing the heart to love and be loved completely

Consider the nature of sex. In sexual intercourse a man and a woman actually do become one. There is a mutual giving and receiving between the two of them, constituting a real exchange of persons, a real communion of persons. Therefore, **every sexual act speaks the language of total self-gift across every dimension of our being** – the physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, and temporal.

To make our acts of love limited or conditional in any of these ways is to fail to respect ourselves and our partner. To be happy and fulfilled, we cannot have the sex (the physical commitment) without the commitment on the other levels as well. Rather, our behavior in a romantic relationship should be in harmony with the actual nature and maturity of our friendship with the other person. Because sex is an exchange and communion of whole persons, the only context in which it is honest in what it communicates is one where the man and woman have committed themselves to each other “for better or worse.” Paradoxically, this commitment, far from constraining the spouses, frees them up to love and give themselves to each other without reserve or fear of being used.

Authentic intimacy and enduring love

Therefore, in order to experience sexual intimacy that is honest, loving, and fulfilling, it is best to practice sexual fidelity to your spouse now, not later. Only in this way will we allow sex to be all that it is meant to be.

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SEX MYTHS

- 1) *Sexual tension builds up over time.*
False: It only seems like this because we are constantly stimulating ourselves, whether sexually or through our other senses. Our sexuality has no need to be constantly expressed, and our bodies handle chastity and abstinence perfectly fine.
- 2) *You need to masturbate and experiment sexually in order to be comfortable with your body and sexuality.*
False: By understanding our biological, psychological, and emotional design, we also understand that we actually love our bodies and respect our sexuality more by not masturbating, experimenting, etc. Furthermore, in marriage, discovering how to best please your spouse is not a burden, but rather part of the beauty of marriage.
- 3) *Faith is the only real reason for chastity*
False: The argument in support of chastity and abstinence is available to common reason. In fact, even many of the religious arguments for chastity are perfectly reasonable.
- 4) *You’re just trying to preach to me and force your morals on my lifestyle*
False: We want sexual happiness and fulfillment just like everyone else. We are not judging anyone. We simply strive to help others understand why we believe chastity to be the best path to that goal, and we invite them to try it out for themselves.

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