

Dating Can Be Great— Without Sex!

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Assuming, of course, that you believe in waiting. Not everybody does.

What about you?

It's not just teens with no morals who face the "to do it or not to do it" question. The issue of "to be or not to be sexually active" haunts genuinely good young people because of the pressure of our culture, which has created an atmosphere of "You can have it all—it's all OK." It's tempting to buy into that: Come spring, we go on retreat, talk about God, do some community service hours; on spring break, we go to a sunny place, get hammered, listen to sex-oriented rappers, take our clothes off, do what comes naturally—it's fine.

But it's not.

Whether you're a deeply committed virgin until marriage, a current virgin who wonders if you can hold out until marriage, or a former virgin who kind of (or perhaps desperately) wishes you still were one—or even if you're currently sexually active but having second or third

thoughts about it—let’s talk about dating without mating.

Some Terms

First, let’s clarify a couple of terms. You probably know their meaning, but just in case.

Abstinence. By itself, it simply means choosing not to do or use something. You can abstain from anything, anchovies or sushi, for example—for many people, not a difficult thing to do. You can abstain from something permanently or just for a while, as when we “give something up” during Lent.

Chastity. This is a broader word. It means controlling sexual desires so that they conform to God’s plan. For a single person, chastity means not engaging in sex. For a married person, chastity means having sex—with your spouse only, and remaining faithful to her or him.

Why practice chastity?

Why not have sex if it's possible to get it? There are many reasons, some of which we've covered in a previous pamphlet. A quick review would include the following:

1. Lots of things can feel like love without actually being love. The rush of a beginning relationship is like that.
2. People fall in and out of love, or what feels like it, several times from early adolescence to adulthood. If every relationship includes sex, a lot of emotional and perhaps physical baggage builds up.
3. Even something done out of love can be a big mistake. Love itself doesn't automatically make an action either smart or right.
4. "Safe sex" and "protected sex" are possibly the most misleading phrases in our national vocabulary today. The