

NPF Q&A 36: IS CHASTITY FOR SINGLE WOMEN MORE FULFILLING THAN FREE LOVE? THE THRILL OF THE CHASTE

Word Count: 698

A few years ago, rock historian Dawn Eden experienced a dramatic conversion to Christ. Through a new book, *The Thrill of the Chaste: Finding Fulfillment While Keeping your Cloths On*, she aims to convince other single women that chastity is more fulfilling than free love. What follows are several excerpts.

“Through chastity – and only through chastity – can all the graces that are part of being a woman come to full flower in you. In other words, it’s not about *how* you meet men. It’s about *who* you are when you meet men. Take care of the ‘who,’ and the ‘how’ will take care of itself.”

How do you think premarital sex affects marriage? With premarital sex, the act that is supposed to be bringing two people closer to one another ends up being the thing that pulls them apart. When you’re being as physically intimate as you can possible be with another person, and you know that person can just walk out, then you have to build a wall and harden yourself to prepare for the possible break. Even if you do get married later, you will have the added work of taking down those walls, because you can’t sustain a marriage with harness of heart and lack of vulnerability. This is one of the reasons why the divorce rate is so much higher when couples cohabitate before marriage.

How do you think premarital sex affects men? In my opinion, it seems to make them feel hollow. Many men will get very much into the romance and the novelty of each new sexual encounter. But on a deeper level, they seem to be starved for real emotional intimacy.

What would you say to those who balk at the Church’s “rules” about sexual behavior outside of marriage? God knows how we are made and he knows what will make us happy. His “rules” about the proper use of sexuality are not there to make our lives difficult, but exist to help us operate at our happiest and most fruitful.

A woman cannot treat sex lightly: “Men with depth quickly figured out I took sex far too lightly,” she explains in her book. “Worse, I became so used to viewing myself and potential partners as objects of physical desire that I became unable to give of myself.” This tendency to view oneself and others as objects is particularly harmful, Dawn believes, and is encouraged by the secular culture, which relentlessly puts forth the idea that lust is a way station on the road to love. *But having sex “like a man, with no strings attached” is simply not possible for women.* “Women are built for bonding. We are vessels, and we seek to be filled. For that reason, sex will always leave us feeling empty unless we are certain we are loved.”

Saying Yes to Chastity: Chastity is not strictly sexual abstinence, though that is part of it. Instead, chastity is saying *yes* to the true meaning of sexuality: that we are made in the image of God and we are to be loved unconditionally as persons – not treated as objects to be used.

Consequently, chastity has less to do about sex specifically and more to do with how we view all of life, Dawn says. Single women in particular should avoid assessing the attributes of men and instead try to appreciate them as unique people. She calls the practice of the virtue of chastity a “vocation” and in her book, encourages women to integrate it into their daily lives. “Whether you practice chastity as a single woman or as a married woman, it bears the same spiritual fruit.” That fruit is patience, fidelity, and self-mastery. Women who cultivate these virtues by embracing chastity will necessarily weed out men not interested in a lasting commitment. She will also give her marriage the best possible chance of success.

For more information on Dawn Eden, go to Misty Mealey’s *The NFP Messenger*, April 07 at www.richmonddiocese.org/nfp. Click on “diocesan NFP newsletter.”

Cordially yours,

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