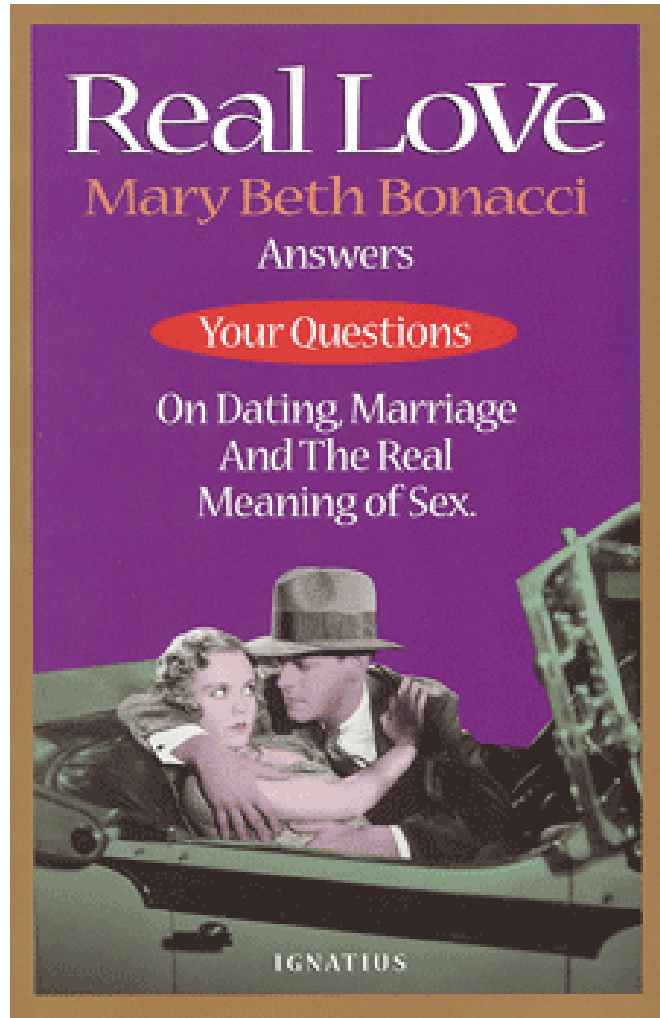


A Summary of Real Love: Answers to Your Questions on Dating, Marriage, and the Real Meaning of Sex By Mary Beth Bonoacci



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About the Author

Mary Beth Bonacci is a graduate from the John Paul II Institute. She has spoken to Christians around the world, including to the youth gathered in Denver for World Youth Day in 1993. Her talks to youth around the world focus on the moral questions that prove to be a challenge to young people. She has a particular calling to making young people aware of the tragedy of impure relationships. Her books are a written response to the many questions she receives concerning matters of the Faith and morality. She is also the author of *We're on a Mission from God: The Generation X Guide to John Paul II, the Catholic Church, and the Real Meaning of Life*, a book that applies the teaching of John Paul II to the lives of young people.

General Overview

The book starts out with A basic, understandable definition of love and elaborates on the different ways of showing love to others. It gives clear arguments as to why sex should only be enjoyed within the context of marriage and explains the consequences of having a sexual relationship outside the bonds of marriage. *Real Love* also addresses the guilt and hurt that people feel while in or after leaving a sexual relationship. Guidelines are given so that a person may determine if they are currently in an impure relationship without the presence of sexual activity. The author stresses the need for chastity within every relationship, whether single or married. Guidelines are also given so that a pure relationship may be maintained. The book also addresses the issues such as sexually transmitted disease and the evil of homosexual relationships.

Chapter One: Love and Sex: What is the Connection?

The distinction is immediately made between love, and what people often mistake for love when they use other people to fill their emotional and physical desires. Real love is found in the giving of ourselves to others. Love is something that is not confined to romance, but it must be found in every relationship. We are using someone when we cease to seek their best interest and use them for our pleasure. Love within a marriage is often expressed in the form of sexual intercourse. Just because the martial embrace is forbidden outside of marriage does not make it a bad or “dirty” thing. God created sex, and everything God creates is good. It is forbidden outside of marriage because it sends a physical and emotional message of lasting fidelity. To give oneself sexually outside of marriage is to say one thing with the body while saying another thing with the mind: I love you enough to use your body for pleasure but not enough to commit myself to you forever.

Just because a couple cannot bear children does not mean that their marriage does not provide a fruitful kind of love. Also, just because a child is born out of wedlock does not mean that the child is unwanted and unloved by God. Even though it is wrong to have sex outside of marriage, unmarried women will still get pregnant as a result of their actions. We have free wills, and if we make a mistake, we must suffer the consequences.

Sex speaks a language that says “I am going to commit myself to you, forever.” Scientifically, sex even creates a chemical bond between the two persons. Even if one intends one thing with the action of sex, the act itself will always spark a physical and emotional bond of fidelity.

Some people think that marriage is simply a ceremony and that people really do not need to go through with the ceremony before engaging in the sexual act. But marriage is a contract between two people that not only provides spiritual security, but material security as well.

Married people are able to enjoy the sexual act far better than those outside of marriage because they do not have to worry about the emotional strain and fear of the possibility that the other partner might leave.

The Catholic Church does have a right to tell anyone what to do with their body because, technically speaking, the body belongs to God alone. It is only on loan from God, and He has the right to tell us what to do with it. The Catholic Church is the mode through which God guides us and tells us that sex must be within the context of marriage to prevent us from being hurt and used.

Chastity is the virtue that helps us stay pure in sexual matters no matter what our state in life. Chastity is not abstaining from sex, for even married people should practice the virtue of chastity; rather it involves understanding love and the role that sex has within a loving relationship.

Chapter Two: Contraception and Pregnancy

An astounding number of young women today get pregnant out of wedlock. It is not alright for a person to want a baby without getting married. This is a selfish thing to do because it does not take the baby's best interest to heart. It is only thinking about the wants and desires of the parent and not the needs of the child. A child deserves to have two parents, and the only way to ensure that the child will is for the parents to be bonded together in marriage.

Teenage pregnancy is never good even if the couple have "long-term plans" in mind. Teenagers are changing rapidly, both physically and emotionally and it is not a good to make any life changing decisions. Moreover, most teens are not thinking about getting married any time soon, and any kind of sexual relationship outside of marriage is wrong. If a teenager is pregnant, the best thing to do is for her to tell her parents. If the parents are hostile, she should find help that will support her and her baby through the difficult time.

Abortion is never right and it never solves a woman's problems. In fact, it compounds them by adding the death of her baby on top of everything else. Women were not designed to kill their children and studies have shown that women who have abortions suffer the same psychological problems as Vietnam veterans. If a woman has committed an abortion and is sorry for what she has done, it is possible to start a healing process by reconciling herself to God through Confession. God forgives all our sins, no matter how bad, as long as we are truly repentant. Even though a woman has gone to Confession for an abortion, she will still feel emotional pain, as abortion leaves deep emotional scars on a woman.

A woman who has been raped should not abort her child; it will only add the hurt of abortion on top of the hurt of the rape.

If an unborn baby has physical defects it is not alright to abort it. We are not to play God and decide who shall live and who shall die.

If a girl does get pregnant out of wedlock she does not need to have an abortion if she feels she cannot take care of the child after it is born. Rather it is possible to give the child up for adoption, which is a loving thing to do because it takes the best interest of the child and the mother to heart.

Not only is contraceptive in the form of the Pill physically bad for a woman's body, it often induces an abortion. Moreover, women do not have a right to contraceptives; they do not help women but rather make women see their fertility, which is a gift from God, as something that is bad and to be avoided.

Contraceptives do not lower the abortion rate, in fact they raise it. Without contraceptives, people have to abstain from sex in order to avoid getting pregnant. With contraceptives, more people are having sex, and when the contraception fails, there are more abortions as a result.

Chapter Three: AIDS, STDs and Safe Sex

It is wrong on many moral levels to have multiple sexual partners, but a good physical reason to abstain from pre-marital sex is the frequent occurrence of sexually transmitted disease. The most common of these diseases are AIDS, Herpes, Human Papillomavirus and Chlamydia. Some of these diseases are incurable.

There is no such thing as ‘safe sex.’ Condoms will not protect anyone from sexually transmitted disease because of the porousness of the latex. Chastity is the only solution if one wants to remain free from sexual diseases. Chastity is also the only solution if one does not want to get pregnant outside of marriage.

Chapter Four: Sex and Emotion

It is possible for an emotional bond to form between two people outside of marriage. Sex is designed to form an actual chemical bond between a man and a woman. It is not something you can control by your sheer will; it is something that will inevitably happen when two people have sex.

When an unmarried person is dating, he or she is trying to figure out and decided if the person they are dating is the person they want to share the rest of their life with and raise their children with. If a person has sex outside of marriage, his or her ability to reason is obscured by the chemical bond that is formed in the sexual act. In the end, a sexually active people cannot make a clear decision as to the compatibility of the person because they are blinded by the bond formed in the sexual act.

Sex outside of marriage can only weaken a relationship for a serious reason. The sexual act physically says that both people want to be with each other forever. However, without marriage to bind the two people together it is unlikely that the two will stay together. By having sex outside of marriage, doubts and worry set in because neither person is bound to the other spiritually, thereby leaving plenty of room for both people to be hurt. People who have sex outside of marriage are lying to each other with their bodies, since they are saying with their bodies that they want to be with each other for the rest of their lives, but they might be thinking something entirely differently with their minds.

The bond will always form, but if a person has sex with multiple people, the bond becomes less and less binding. The chemical bond in sex was intended to hold one man and one woman together for the rest of their lives. If one continues to break and reform that bond with other people, he will begin to find that it becomes harder and harder to love others.

Just because two people have had sex does not mean that they should get married. They should live chastely and then slowly consider the marriage; it is not something to rush into.

Chapter Five: Chastity, Sex, and Marriage

Sex outside of marriage is not a real expression of love because it does not taking into account what is best for the other person. If you are willing to subject another person to physical and emotional hurt, you do not really love them. Sex outside of marriage is not a good way to show someone that you love them because it is saying one thing with your body that you do not really mean to say with your mind, “I want to be with you forever.”

You should never remain in a relationship when you are being pressured to give yourself sexually before marriage. This is not a loving relationship.

The only time someone is “ready” to have sex is within the context of a marriage. One might be physically mature enough for the sexual act, but the only time one can be completely ready for it is within the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Chastity is the best way to show another person that they are loved. It tells the other person that although you would really like to have sex with him or her right now, you are not going to because you know it will hurt him or her and use that person.

It is not a good idea to live with a boyfriend or girlfriend before marriage. You are living a life that only married people should live, thereby engaging in sex when you might not intend to stay together for the rest of your lives. Moreover, living with a boyfriend or girlfriend can seriously hurt the current and future relationships. It does not allow for commitment; why commit to something for life when you can have all the perks without saying “I do?”

It is not acceptable to have sex before marriage in order to find out if the other partner is sexually compatible. This is wrong, once again, simply because it is saying the body language of eternity outside of marriage. It is also wrong because it rates the other person as an object.

Just because one is engaged, it does not mean that one can have sex. There is still no permanent commitment, as in the Sacrament of Marriage; an engagement is not binding. It is always a sin to have sex outside of marriage even if you marry the person with whom you had pre-marital sex.

The Catholic Church does not suppress women by not allowing them to have sex outside of marriage. In fact, the Catholic Church is protecting them from physical harm and emotional hurt.

If a person never gets married, he or she is expected never to have sex. Sex is not something humans need in order to survive. Moreover, to have sex outside of marriage is lying to the other person; the action of sex says one thing and the mind says another.

Married people are also supposed to practice the virtue of chastity; they need to constantly call to mind why they are having sex with their partner. Is it to show that they love the other person, or is it simply because they want sex? If it is the latter, chastity is not being practiced because chastity always calls to mind the best interest of the other person. If the action is not a gift of self for the other person, then the action is not a gift of love but rather it is a selfish act.

Contraception within marriage is wrong because it tells the person that their body is wanted for its physical ability to please and nothing more. The gift of fertility is looked on as problem. Also, contraception causes couples to lie to each other because the action of sex says, “I love you forever but I don’t want your children.” Catholics can use Natural Family Planning to space pregnancies without using contraceptives. Natural Family Planning takes into consideration the best interest of the couple and allows the couple to naturally avoid, but not prevent, pregnancy.

Artificial insemination is wrong because it takes God out of the act of procreation.

The Catholic Church cannot allow divorce because an actual spiritual bond has formed between the two people whether they like it or not. This does not mean that a person has to live with a person that has become abusive or might cause physical harm; however, the other person may not marry again until the first spouse dies. Furthermore, an annulment is not a Catholic form of divorce, but rather a long process that discovers if there was some impediment to prevent an actual marriage from taking place. A child is not illegitimate if his parents’ marriage is annulled. Legitimacy has to do with legal succession of property in families. The state recognizes a legal marriage which is all that is necessary for a child to be legitimate.

No one knows what exactly causes homosexuality. The church does not condemn being homosexual, since some people may not be able to help their sexual orientation. What the Church forbids is homosexual activity, which is engaging in sexual acts with a person of the same sex. Homosexuals can get married – that is to

persons of the opposite sex. It is technically impossible for two people of the same sex to marry, since marriage is between one man and one woman.

Chapter Six: Finding Real Love

Sex should not be a replacement for real love and neither does the action of sex actually mean or create love, as many people who have sex do not love each other. Love comes from recognizing the dignity of other human beings and that they are created in the image and likeness of God. We should never think that we are not capable of real love and simply settle for sex.

Being in love is not a feeling but a decision. You cannot decide whether or not you are in love by simply analyzing your feelings – you need to use your rational powers as well. You will know you have met the person you are supposed to marry when they meet all your expectations by his or her ability to serve as a future spouse, the future parent of your children, and partner in upholding chastity. A person should neither settle for someone, nor should they listen just to their feelings. Reason is needed in matters of love.

Just because you have strong feelings for a person does not mean that you are in love, especially if you are unhappy with the person. Often a person is merely infatuated, but they think that they are in love. Infatuation is the state of being in love with the idea of being in love.

In order to love someone you need to know them; therefore, love at first sight is not really a reality. There is attraction at first sight. There is nothing wrong with being attracted to the person of the opposite sex. John Paul II says that it is a good thing because God created it. But we should not let attraction obstruct our ability to decide whether or not we truly love the other person.

It is possible to fall in love with someone other than the person to whom you married. But that is why marriage involves a promise to stay with the other person until death. This is also why one should never settle for the first person to whom one is attracted. The person you marry should meet and fulfill all the qualities that you are looking for in a spouse, and you should love them more than anyone else.

Chapter Seven: Healing the Hurt

It is important to remember that chastity and virginity are not the same things. Virginity refers to a condition of a person's body; a virgin is a person who has never engaged in the sexual act. Chastity is a way of living that respects one's sexuality and the sexuality of others. Chastity can be practiced, and should be practiced by everyone, even those people who have made sexual mistakes in the past and are no longer virgins.

Premarital sex is a serious sin but only if the person was aware of the fact that he was committing a sin at the time. God put certain moral rules in our lives so that we might live the best life possible. When we knowingly go against the law of God we commit a grave sin, for we are telling God that we do not want to live His way. We cut ourselves off from God until we either return to Him through the Sacrament of Penance or die and go to hell.

If one has already had premarital sex, he or she is not doomed to go to hell, as long as the sinner repents of what he or she has done and goes to Confession with the intent of never committing that sin again. If one seriously tries to keep away from that sin, but then falls back into it again, it is acceptable to go back to Confession again. We are weak humans and sometimes we fall a multiple times before we have built the will power to avoid sin.

Sometimes a person feels guilt even after he or she has been to Confession. It is important to remember that after confessing any sin, even the very worst imaginable, God forgets that the person has ever committed the

sin. The feeling of guilt does not make a person a bad person – it is natural feeling. The important thing to remember is that the sin no longer exists after Confession; it is gone, wiped away.

Someone who has lost his or her virginity can begin to feel whole again by living chastely. It is possible that a person that has lost virginity can come to live a chaste life. In fact, it is not only possible but also recommended. A person who wants to start over again and live chastely should follow these steps – go to Confession, persevere in prayer, form a buddy system, fill life with positive love, develop talents, and know the limits. A buddy system is like having a support team that helps remind a person of the goal of living chastely. By filling one's life with positive love, a person does not feel a need to turn to sex as a source of love. By developing talents, one discovers that he or she has an individual dignity and worth. By knowing one's limits, one can avoid situations when one might be tempted to sexual impurity.

For those who have left relationships and feel like they cannot forget the person that they fell in love with, they will feel a lot of pain. This is normal and it is also normal if it takes a long time for the pain to heal. In the meantime, the best way to make someone feel better is to give to others, by helping them to live better lives.

Drinking is another problem in living a chaste life. If a person drinks too much, he or she loses the ability to reason and then the individual might do things he or she will regret if the person had been sober.

It will be very difficult at first to live a chaste life, but with determination and grace from God, it is possible to live one. Some people are addicted to sex the same way other people are addicted to alcohol and drugs. Many things can cause sexual addiction, most are a result of early childhood development. Some people are addicted to relationships, meaning that they constantly need to be in some sort of romantic relationship in order to feel safe and happy. Both of these conditions can be cured with a lot of prayer and a Christian therapist.

Even if one has lost his or her virginity and made a considerable number of mistakes, it is possible to live a chaste life. Chastity is about the future, not the past.

Chapter Eight: Walking the Walk

Being chaste does not only involve abstaining from sex, but it also involves abstaining from all actions that might cause sexual arousal in the other person. This includes excessive kissing and petting. The idea is not to go as far as one can without having sex – the goal is to keep oneself and the other person in a state of chastity.

It is not acceptable to fantasize about sexual situations because they are mere figments of the imagination. Furthermore, sex was intended as a means of communication; when a person fantasizes, he or she is perverting sex because it is no longer a communication.

Masturbation and pornography are wrong because both are perversions of the sexual act.

In leading a chaste life, it is important that a person dresses chastely. A girl could be thinking one thing with her mind but saying another thing with her body and the manner in which she dresses.

It is important to avoid near occasions of sin, such as excessive drinking and sleeping with a person of the opposite sex.

It is acceptable to be attracted to the person of the opposite sex; this is a natural and a good thing. But if one is tempted to act in an unchaste manner, one should try and divert oneself another way, find another way to let out energy, and focus the mind on something else.

The best way to resist pressuring for sex or unchaste actions from another is to say no. There is no other way around it. An explanation as to why one is committed in acting in a chaste manner may help – but not always. It is important to always act out of charity, even when telling someone something that is difficult.

It is hard to leave a relationship where one is sexually active, but it should be done as soon as possible and the relationship should not be renewed for a while.

Chapter Nine: Men and Women

Men and women are different in many different ways. Women tend to be more emotional creatures and seek out others when they need help. Men tend to want to do things by themselves; they do not always seek help when they need it.

Women's emotions tend to fluctuate more than men's, but this does not mean that men should not show their emotions. When one is hurt, sometime the best thing to do is cry; it does not help to hold it all inside.

Men and women reach their sexual peak at different times. The sexual peak is when either sex is most easily aroused. For men, this happens sometime in their late teens. Most women do not reach their sexual peak until they are in their thirties.

It is never acceptable to try and sexually arouse someone when you have no right to do so. This is part of living a chaste life. It is not only the woman's job to keep a relationship chaste; the man must do his share too.

There are men and women in the world who do not use people, who are virgins, and who are saving their virginity until they are married. At times this does not seem possible, but it is true.

Chapter Ten: Single Survival

The reason that most people look down on dating multiple people today is because of sexual promiscuity. Once someone is sexually active with a person, that person does not tend to switch partners easily. Therefore, when you have unmarried people having sex, naturally dating around is also going to mean sleeping around and that is still unacceptable because you are supposed to be faithful to one person.

A first date should involve doing something that allows you to get to know the other person better.

Flirting is permissible if you are trying to show that you are sincerely interested in another person. But if you are just flirting for fun, that is not a good thing. You are sending mixed messages, which is not fair to the other person or yourself.

There is no such thing as a perfect person. Everyone has flaws. But you should never marry someone whose flaws are not conducive to a happy marriage. You should not try and change a person or think that you will be able to change flaws that a person has. If you are not willing to live with the flaws that a person has, do not marry him or her.

There is no perfect time to get married. A person should be mature and understand the responsibilities that he or she will be undertaking. But it is important to remember that the single years are a blessing too. During these years you do not have any responsibilities, and you can do many things that will not be possible once you are married with children.

Most men and women want the exact same things out of a relationship. However, women are more apt to always be talking about relationships, and men are more likely not going to talk about relationships.

Interrelationships are never intrinsically wrong. But there are often problems that arise from different cultures that can impede a relationship.

It is hard to have a platonic relationship with another person who wants more than a platonic relationship. It is permissible to continue to be friends so long as you do not lead the other person on to think that you are attracted to them when you are not.

Some friendships turn into romantic relationships. This is often the best way to meet your future husband or wife. Whenever a friendship is going to the next level it is very important that the two people proceed with caution.

Here a few rules to follow to know when you should break up with someone. First, you are certain you will not get married. Second, there is dishonesty in the relationship. Third, the person uses pornography. Fourth, the person uses drugs or is an alcoholic. Fifth, the person is doing illegal things. Sixth, the person is abusive. Seventh, the person is a control freak. Eighth, there is excessive turmoil in your life because of the relationship.

You do not have to stop talking with the person you broke up with; nor does breaking up mean that you can no longer be friends. But in both cases, a great deal of caution should be used. However, often talking with or trying to stay friends just prolongs the pain of breaking up with the other person.

Chapter Eleven: For Teens Only

The numbers of teens who are sexually active in the United States alone is a depressing number. But there are many who are committed to saving sex until marriage.

Teen pregnancy is not a good thing for many reasons. A baby deserves to have two parents – a wedded father and mother. Babies are a huge responsibility that most teens are not prepared to undertake. Moreover, the teen years are important formative years in the life of a person.

Just because teens are “going to have sex anyway,” does in no way mean that they should receive condoms or other forms of contraceptives. Human beings are rational animals. They do have a choice as to whether or not they are going to have sex. There is no reason for any teenager to be having sex outside of wedlock. Therefore, it does not make any sense to provide a teen with something that says “Go ahead and do it,” when teens should not do it at all.

It is possible for teens to fall in love, but it is important to know what to do when it happens. They need to allow each other to grow and make decisions and complete their education. They need to stay chaste. If a couple can do this, they are on the right road. If not, the relationship can be damaging to both parties involved.

Dating is meant to provide an opportunity for a person to discover a future husband or wife. As teenagers, finding a husband or a wife is usually not the intention. Therefore, it is important to group date, thereby allowing them to build friendships with a lot of people.

A person is ready to start dating when he or she can balance a relationship without cutting out important aspects of each one’s individual life. A person also needs to be able to be mature enough to remain chaste while dating.

Big age gaps are not always the best thing. Why is a much older guy dating a younger girl? If a much older man is dating a younger girl, it is very probable that there is something wrong with his maturity level and he is trying to take advantage of the girl.

Long term high school relationships are not always the best thing, as they tend to lead to a lack of chastity. Dating was not meant to be a long term thing, but rather a short term process done in order to find a spouse.

It is extremely important to date someone with the same morals and faith as you.

The advice of parents should be taken when one is dating. Love is blind and sometimes flaws that are obvious to others are not obvious to the two parties in question.

The media has a big effect on how we look at and treat sex. Therefore it is very important to carefully screen what we watch, listen to, and read. We do not have to accept the message that the media sends. Also, we should boycott products that advertise by using sex to sell.

The best way to avoid peer pressure is to avoid the company of those who do not share our morals and ideals. We should instead surround ourselves with people who hold the same truths that we do. A good group of friends will support our decisions to remain chaste, whereas bad friends will pressure us to do things that we know are not morally right.