

SEX and the CHRISTIAN **teen**

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Liguori

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Introduction: Still another sex book!

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WELL, YOU HOLD in your hands still another Sex Book For Young People. You'll find a lot of them on the market these days. You probably couldn't live long enough to follow all the advice in all of them. Why did I write another one?

I'd like you to have a truly great sex life. That's one reason. (Sound good? I thought so.)

You're being lied to about sex in many ways. We need to stop the lies and tell the truth. That's another reason.

You deserve joy, not suffering. Sex can bring either one—no big secret about that. There are ways to increase your chances of experiencing joy, not suffering, from sex. That's another reason.

If you don't know already, you'll soon pick up the idea that this book will put God in the sexual picture.

"PUT THIS DUMB BOOK DOWN INSTANTLY!!!" a dozen voices from your memory banks may be screaming right now.

Some people have this hang-up that putting God into sex means taking all the thrills and fun out of it. They think it's like taking all the taste out of food. You end up with a sex life that's like a plate full of diet rice cakes—no sodium, no cholesterol, no fat, no calories; just healthful fiber and all the taste of fresh cardboard. They think a religious view of sex is like that.

Bull. It's a lot more like putting the real taste (back) into food. Stick around.

If any of the following descriptions fit you, You'll find something worth thinking about in this book.

- You're not sexually active, you never have been, and you don't think you should be. But you're wondering if you're normal. Or you're wondering if your lack of experience will be a handicap when the real thing, like true love and marriage, comes along.
- You've been sexually active, you still are, and so far you don't see any reason to stop. It seems like everybody does it sooner or later.
- You've never been sexually active, and you don't definitely intend to be. But it looks *awfully* interesting—especially the way some of your friends describe it—and you're wondering if it's possible to hold out.
- You've been sexually active; but now it's pretty clear that it was a mistake. You're wondering if God thinks you're scum and if you'll always be used material.
- You're sexually active with someone now, but you're beginning to have big questions about it. It isn't turning out the way you thought it would.
- You're wondering if your sexual feelings are “normal” and, if not, what kind of a life does that mean you're headed for.
- You're the victim of sexual abuse of any kind, past or present.
- You want to do the right thing sexually, but you're wondering if anybody really knows what the heck that is—or if it's even possible to find out.

“Come on, baby, light my fire.”

That's a great metaphor for sex. Fire can warm and entertain and excite; it can produce marvelous, memorable good times; it can support and sustain life.

And it can burn and injure; it can run wild, cause incredible pain and suffering; it can destroy life.

Your sexuality is like that. Please consider all the possibilities,

because they're there. And it's your choice. You can make it be either kind of fire. *You* can write the script for *your* sexuality.

The problem is that a lot of people are trying to hand you an already-written script for your sexuality. Why? Well, some of them just plain enjoy controlling other people. They get a cheap, superior thrill out of bragging about how they've followed the sexual script while you apparently haven't had the guts to.

Others are making big bucks off of it, selling everything from jeans to swimsuits (ever wonder why such a small amount of fabric costs so much and who's buying new Porsches with the profits?) to condoms.

So if someone, in one way or another, hands you a script that says, "You're _____ years old! You should at least have done _____ and _____ by now," inform them that you're not their robot or anybody's robot. Tell them that your body is not a performer in some teenage or young-adult sexual drama they're directing and that you'll make your own decisions.

Of course, you have to *decide* all of that inside your own mind first. You have to decide your life is worth so much that you'll write the script for it. Maybe you'll get some help to write it, but from people who honestly want you to be happy, not people who want to control your behavior or simply get into your billfold or your purse—or perhaps somewhere else.



Sex—where are we? Where are *you*?

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SEX: THERE HAVE BEEN some changes in the last few years.

Correction: Sex itself hasn't changed all that much. The human reproductive system is pretty consistent from one century to the next.

But there have been major changes in what young people hear about sex and how to handle it. Some of the changes have been great and should have happened sooner. And some have been—well, the most accurate description would be “destructive.” They've caused a lot of pain.

Let's take a brief look at how the older and the younger generation communicated about sex in “the good old days” of not so long ago. Get into a pair of spiked jeans or a poodle skirt if you want to create some atmosphere, and we'll go back thirty or forty years. If we put it in sort of parable form, it might go like this:

The child was growing up and becoming more aware of the fields and plots of land that bordered on the family yard. Along one plot of land that bordered the back of the yard was a high, heavy, solid wooden fence. Adults had put up the fence. There was a gate leading to the other side, but it was triple padlocked.

“What's over there?” asked the child.

“Over where?” the adults asked in return, instantly becoming very uncomfortable.

“Over *there*, on the other side of that fence,” said the child.

“Oh—uh, nothing, really.” The adults cleared their throats and tried to change the subject.

“But there has to be *something*,” the child insisted, “because the other day I heard that...”

“*Forget* whatever you heard! It probably wasn’t very nice. There’s no need to talk about what’s over there for a very long time. We’ll let you know when that time comes.”

“Then there *is* something...”

“We’ll let you know when the time comes for you to know about it. Until then, do not discuss it with anyone.”

“What’s the matter?” asked the child. “Is there something wrong with it?”

The adults seemed confused for a moment, but then they answered: “No, not exactly wrong, but it’s—just not always—very nice. Now be a good child and just forget all about it. Even when people are grown up, if they want to be nice, they don’t think about it very much.”

Yes, that’s an exaggeration but, in some cases, not by much. The sex topic could be delicate and explosive not too long ago.

One of the good changes in the past few decades is that many adults have become less embarrassed to discuss sex with children and teenagers. For the most part, adults no longer make up ridiculous substitute words for sexual body parts. “Penis” and “vagina” can be pronounced in public without shock waves spreading throughout a ten-mile radius.

I said many adults—not all. Some are still uncomfortable with this “new” frankness. It doesn’t mean they’re stupid. They just honestly think that the less something is talked about, the less of a problem it is likely to be, particularly when it comes to sex.

And there’s another group of adults who are—well, almost the opposite. Your parents probably aren’t among them. These people write books and magazine articles and make videos for things like high-school health or lifestyles classes. In terms of our parable, *their* approach sounds more like this:

“What’s *really* over there?” asked the young teenager, pointing

to a plot of land bordering the backyard. There was no fence along the border, only a sign that said, *REMEMBER. BE RESPONSIBLE!*

“Ah—you’re growing up!” the adults smiled. “Tell us—are you becoming mature?”

“Of course,” said the teenager.

“Well, then,” said the adults, “perhaps you’re ready to go over there. It’s a place where people enjoy themselves in a very natural, fulfilling way. Everyone goes there sooner or later, and there’s nothing wrong with going sooner—as long as you’re responsible.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, there are some things you should know, so listen carefully. Along with the enjoyable, fulfilling things over there, unfortunately, there’s also a cliff with a very deep drop. And some quicksand. And some poisonous animals.

“Now if you’re *responsible* when you go there with someone, you won’t throw that person over the cliff, see? Isn’t that a good idea? Here are some other smart and responsible ideas: Try your best not to get caught in the quicksand. It could—we have to be honest with you here—change your life very drastically. And finally, try to avoid getting bitten by one of the poisonous animals.”

“Are those things hard to avoid?”

“No, not really. You simply need to take some protection along with you. We’ll show you how to use the protection. In fact, we’ll even give you some. It’s all a part of being *responsible*.”

“Does the protection always work?”

“Well, now, let’s not look on the dark side. Nothing is perfect, of course, and if—well, if something happens, it’s fixable. That’s the part to remember. Be *responsible*, and if something happens anyway—or even if it happens because you *weren’t* responsible—it’s still fixable. Just come see us and we’ll make it all better.”

Translation: “(1) Don’t rape; (2) don’t make a baby; (3) don’t get or spread a disease. Other than that—hey, if you’re mature enough to handle it, go for it. After all, you have a right to exercise natural, healthy body functions. And if you do make a baby—no, wait, we’d better not call it a baby. Let’s say if you do create