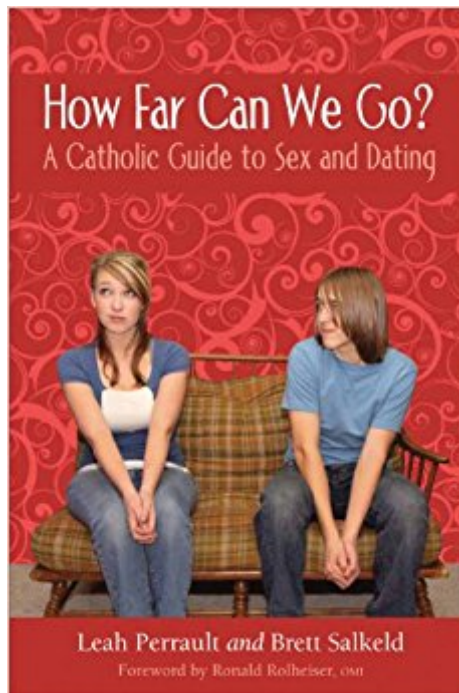




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How Far Can We Go?: A Catholic Guide To Sex And Dating



Synopsis

A clear and concise guide on sex and dating in the Catholic Church. What does the Church say about sex and dating? Too often, Catholic teens and young adults get all their information on this topic from the secular media. If they do hear something from people in the Church, much of what is being said is misguided, impractical or both. This embarrassment-free presentation, designed to take seriously the concerns and social realities of today's teens and young adults, sets out a Catholic approach to dating and sexual relationships in simple, direct language. This short, entertaining and very helpful book is the result of extensive workshops with teenagers in both school and parish settings. As a result, the approach taken by the authors is both unapologetically Catholic and definitely theologically correct while at the same time completely open in its direct presentation of human sexuality. This book is a must have for Catholic teachers, high school chaplains, youth ministers, campus ministers, parents and anyone else who deals with these questions from young people on a regular basis.

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Customer Reviews

Rarely do I have the opportunity to so enthusiastically recommend a book as theologian, spouse, and parent. Perrault and Salkeld have written a clear, engaging, and accessible volume that is doctrinally faithful to church teaching, theologically sound, and pastorally wise. More importantly, they have written that rare book on Catholic sexual ethics that might actually engage and even persuade your average teenager or young adult! Richard R. Gaillardetz, Joseph Professor of Systematic Theology, Boston College --Richard R. Gaillardetz, Joseph Professor of Systematic

Theology, Boston CollegeThe authors are keenly aware of the omnipresence of the secular world and the powerful influence it has on young people. They know that Christianity is countercultural. Therefore, they approach controversial issues such as abstaining from intercourse prior to marriage, masturbation, and the use of contraception very gently and with great sensitivity. Nowhere, however, do they depart from Catholic orthodoxy. (National Catholic Register review) Dr. Donald DeMarco, professor emeritus of St. Jerome's University --Dr. Donald DeMarco, professor emeritus of St. Jerome's University --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

So . . . how far can we go?Â Where is that fine line between being overly fearful and overly careless about sex?Â How do we avoid frigidity on the one hand and heartbreak on the other?Â This book, drawing upon centuries of moral and human wisdom, is a healthy guide.Ron Rolheiser, OMI, from the foreword --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I thought it would be so cliché and homeschooly, but it is one of the most phenomenal I've read!!!!

Great read!

This book was easy to read. I have read other books that I like better than this one. I like this one as a stepping stone to get started in doing any sort of relationship researching.

A great resource for teens and parents!

If you've ever worked with youth, you know that one of the most confusing topics is sexuality. Young people are bombarded with conflicting messages from the media, entertainment, their families, and from the Church on the purpose and meaning of sex. Alongside that confusion stands raging hormones, new relationships, and questions about love, dating, and relationships.InÂ How Far Can We Go? A Catholic Guide to Sex and DatingÂ (Paulist Press, paperback, 112 pages) Leah Perrault and Brett Salkeld provide simple, attractive guidance to much of this confusion. In the book they cover everything from courting to pornography, to intimacy, birth control, marriage, and more.The book carefully walks the line between an unhealthy rejection of sex, and a capitulation to our culture's sexual norms. Throughout the pages it stays faithful to the Magisterium and agrees with the Church: sex is good in the right place and the right time. Like the Church, the authors treat

relationships and sex as part of a larger picture which includes vocation, the dignity of the body, and the meaning of human relationships. At a concise 112 pages, *How Far Can We Go?* is short and digestible for young people. It would be a great gift to any teenager, young adult, or anyone who regularly works with them.

In my days as a young unmarried Catholic, I often suffered through chastity talks or had dating manuals pressed on me. The dating manuals were painfully earnest in their descriptions of hypothetical couples who were keeping their relationships 99.44% pure by following strict rules of behavior. Chastity talks were even more painful because you had to be there in person, squirming in your folding chair and wishing the floor would swallow you as the speaker hemmed and hawed, or, even worse, was wildly enthusiastic for Purity! There seemed to be no happy medium between either rigid guidelines that seemed designed to minimize contact between a couple, or hazy exhortations to purity that gave one no practical guidance in the matter of a relationship rooted in reality. Brett Salkeld and Leah Perrault know this sad scene all too well, and they have written a refreshing remedy and valuable resource, *How Far Can We Go? A Catholic Guide to Sex and Dating*. An excerpt: "Here are two famous answers to the question 'How far can we go?' 'Keep both feet on the floor.' Asking 'How far can we go?' is like taking your girlfriend or boyfriend in your arms, walking to the edge of a cliff, and asking, 'How close can I get to the edge?' We had to write this book because we think both these answers are unsatisfactory. We think we can do better. The first answer is very practical, but anyone with a little imagination can get around it. In trying to set out an easy-to-follow guideline for Catholic couples, it ignores the question of Christian formation. It says that physical intimacy is only about how you act, and has no connection to the kind of person you are called to become. The second answer is much more dangerous. The foundation of the metaphor it uses is that sex is roughly equivalent to suicide! In other words, sex is dangerous and sinful. Any advance in physical intimacy is just getting you closer and closer to the edge of the cliff. When we give answers like this it is no wonder the world thinks the Church is down on sex!... One of the reasons that Christian books on sex and dating have given a misleading view about sexuality is that they ignore the essential communicative aspect of sexuality. Sexual sin is presented as crossing some vague boundary partway up an imaginary list of increasingly intimate physical acts. But, in the context of physical intimacy, sin isn't crossing an arbitrary line. Sexual sin is about using your body to lie to your partner (and probably yourself) about the nature of your relationship. There need to be one or two clear lines about what is appropriate for unmarried people, but those lines are not drawn to keep people from acts that impure in and of themselves. They are drawn to keep people from

lying with the language of their bodies. This book, then, is not primarily about which acts are and are not permissible. This book is about learning to speak the truth with your body."One thing I really appreciate here is that Salkeld and Perrault have a respect for their young audience, and don't treat the question "How far can we go?" as an attempt to find out how much whoopie one can get away with, but an honest query about what is right and appropriate at any point in a relationship. (I snickered out loud at their description of a youth group leader who answers this question from a young couple by saying, "I'll let you in on a little secret. Your relationship will do much better if, instead, you ask yourselves how pure you can be." If you haven't heard twaddle like that, you haven't been around the Authentically Catholic! youth scene much.) They emphasize from the start that their model of dating "presumes that those who use it are sincerely trying to live holy lives. If you're hoping to find loopholes so you can get away with as much as possible and still say you're following Catholic rules, this model isn't for you."Just what is this model? It relies on honestly answering the question "How much of myself does God want me to give to this other person?"The authors explain:"Sex is not a shortcut to intimacy! If you want to have sex but don't want to get married, you need to look at your reason for not getting married. If it's not a very good reason [the financial demands of a big wedding being an earlier example], work through it and then get married. If it's a good reason, it's probably a good reason not to have sex. Sex speaks a profound language of the body that is both a sign and a source of the kind of unity that married people share. If you're not ready for marriage, then you're simply not ready for the demands of a relationship that includes sex.If you understand our explanation of the Church's teaching on premarital sex, you should be able to follow our dating model. It works on exactly the same principle; physical gifts of self ought to reflect our self-giving in other areas of a relationship."The dating model the authors set forth is firmly rooted in responsibility and free will: not a "one-size-fits-all" set of rules (because every person and every relationship is unique), but guidelines for discerning at each step of a relationship the appropriate levels of not just physical intimacy, but spiritual, intellectual, social, and emotional intimacy All of these are often bound up with one another because humans are bodies and souls -- what affects one must effect the other. One of the most common-sense statements in the book is that intimacy needs to grow gradually over time, and the authors provide examples of couples at different stages of life and relationship -- high school students, couples in college, working college graduates, and high-powered career men and women -- to show how this discernment can play out in various ways. There's a fun set of graphs that examine how all forms of intimacy progress over the course of the journey from perfect strangers to spouses. The authors aren't shy about expressing the Church's teachings against common sexual pitfalls such as pornography and

masturbation, and clearly explain the reasons for these teachings. They are unequivocal on the Church's teaching against premarital sex and activities that try to mimic the effects of sex, and devote the last chapters of the book to marriage and NFP. I absolutely recommend this book -- I really think it's one of the best resources I've encountered for an honest and balanced treatment of what it means to be a faithful Catholic moving toward marriage. For what it's worth, I find the authors' discussion of sexuality and intimacy in relationships to be very true to my own experience of having a real and intense and Catholic unmarried relationship while trying to steer a good course between prudery and prurience. This is the book I'll give to my own children to read when they're old enough for such discussions, and I can give no higher praise than that.

I was given this book by a friend, and can honestly say it is the ONLY book on this topic I'd consider recommending on the topic of relationships for teens/young adults. Most of the books out there are all self-defense manuals - they either treat physical intimacy as if it were an intrinsic evil to be avoided at all costs, or they treat it as if it were a necessary evil that requires that you protected yourself in every way possible from its emotional consequences. Both make the mistake that somehow people will magically know when they're "ready for sex" - the former being when a marriage certificate tells you you're ready, regardless of where you are at emotionally, and the latter assuming that people will somehow make thoughtful, disciplined and responsible choices in the heat of the moment with a raging cocktail of hormones clouding their judgement. In my opinion, it is unlikely that anyone who trusts the advice of either of these types of books will come out unscathed. Unlike other books, everything in this book is shockingly practical - whether you're religious or not. This book really shines at communicating the importance of physical intimacy in the context of the whole relationship. It doesn't treat physical intimacy as if it were an evil trap waiting to ensnare us. Rather, it provides practical advice and real-world guidelines for judging the amount of physical intimacy that is appropriate in the context of the level of emotional, intellectual, and spiritual intimacy in your relationship. Examples from real couples are used throughout the book to help put everything in context for young people in similar situations. Perhaps the most impressive thing about this book is that the authors manage to somehow treat the subject in an entertaining, accessible fashion while remaining completely orthodox to Christian theology (the authors are catholic but I don't see anything specifically catholic in here that wouldn't apply to any Christian, or frankly even an atheist). Finally I have something I can recommend to my kids without worrying about sarcastic guffaws of laughter that come along with books like "I kissed dating goodbye". If there were more books like this, people wouldn't think Christian attitudes toward sex were so negative. Kudos to the

authors.

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