



## Q & A

**Q:** Being physical with my boyfriend brings us closer together. I love him and want to do what's right, but I don't really want to stop. We don't go "all the way," isn't that OK?

**A:** It's best not to hide behind technicalities when it comes to sex. The fact is, any sexual activity is inappropriate for those outside of marriage. Sexual activity does bring you and your partner closer together—that's how God designed our sexuality. When this happens outside of marriage, the bonds between us are easily broken, and people are often hurt as a result. If we're serious about our faith, we'll stay away from sexual activity outside of marriage.

**Q:** I've done "things" with my girlfriend and know they are wrong. I don't want to confess what I've done to my priest—he'd never look at me the same way again. What should I do?

**A:** Priests understand that everyone deals with the same temptations. No matter what, your priest wants the best for you, and wants you to be close to God. There is nothing that will make him happier than to work with you towards healing, especially through the sacrament of confession. Remember that a priest is present during confession as a witness before Christ; forgiveness doesn't come from him, but from Christ himself.

### Resources:

- *Accept Nothing Less: God's Best for Your Body, Mind, and Heart*, by Jim Burns, Ph.D., Bethany House Publishers, 2008.
- *Sex Has a Price Tag: Discussions about Sexuality, Spirituality, and Self Respect* by Pam Stenzel, Rick Bundschuh and Steven Case, Zondervan Publishing, 2003.
- True Love Waits: <http://www.lifeway.com/tlw/>
- Relevant Magazine: <https://www.relevant-magazine.com/life/.../17168-the-purity-puzzle>
- National Abstinence Clearinghouse: <http://www.abstinence.net/>

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If you or someone you know is struggling with sexual purity, speak to a friend, a trusted adult, or your parish priest to help you set boundaries and attainable goals in your relationships.

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA  
 DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES  
 83 ST. BASIL ROAD, GARRISON, NY 10524  
 PHONE: 646-519-6180 • FAX: 646-519-6191  
 WEB: [WWW.YOUTH.GOARCH.ORG](http://WWW.YOUTH.GOARCH.ORG)



## GET THE FACTS

When you hear, “everyone is doing it,” it’s not true. Less than half of all high school students have sex before graduating.

**Setting boundaries.** Statistics prove that if you can set proper boundaries before a situation arises in your relationship, more often than not, you will make the proper decision.

**Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD’s) are a big risk.** No one who has sex plans on getting an STD, but this year alone, one out of every four teenagers will be infected.

**The emotional attachment that accompanies sexual activity is too often understated.** It often causes people to stay in bad relationships longer than they should. In addition, when the relationship does finally come to an end, it can easily turn one’s life upside down because of the physical and emotional attachment to the other person.

## NAVIGATING THROUGH YOUR TEEN YEARS: SEXUAL PURITY

## KNOW THE SIGNS

**Sex affects your emotional wellbeing.** Teens that are sexually active are more likely to feel depressed and are significantly less likely to be happy.

**Many teens who decide to have sex end up wishing they hadn’t.** The regret can play havoc with one’s self-esteem and confidence.

**Think faith determines one’s actions?** It’s often just the opposite. While most Christian teens rely on their faith to keep them away from sexual temptation, those that have sex often try to justify it by changing their beliefs and morality into thinking there’s nothing wrong with it.

## THE CHURCH SPEAKS

It’s important to remember who came up with sex in the first place. Like all of His gifts to us, God provided us with the beautiful gift of our sexuality, but not to use in whatever way we like. He created it as a means of keeping married couples close to each other, and as the means of continuing His creation (hence the term: procreation). God’s commandments are all given to us for OUR sake, not His.

- Jesus said that even looking at someone lustfully is a sin. We should struggle for purity, not only in our actions but in our minds and hearts. A simple tip: when your eyes start to wander, recite the *Lord’s Prayer* or the *Jesus Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have Mercy on Me, a Sinner*.
- Everyone has sexual temptation. St. John Cassian said that “only the lifeless are exempt from the battles of lust,” it’s part of being a human being. We all have to deal with this because it engulfs our everyday lives on the internet, on TV, at movies, etc. The question remains, how will you handle it?
- Modern society says we should “be ourselves” and to do whatever we feel like, but Orthodox Christianity teaches us that we are most ourselves when we don’t allow temptation to enslave us. While the struggle against any sexual activity outside of marriage is a difficult one, those who wish to enter the Kingdom of Heaven enter by the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13).
- The Church provides us with the way to avoid all sins in the first place, through regular prayer, fasting (where we practice saying “no” to ourselves), the services of the Church, and the advice and support of our Spiritual Fathers. The Church also gives us the cure if we’ve fallen into sin. Confession is the Church’s way for us to admit what we’ve done and experience God’s forgiveness and love first-hand. It’s never too late to come back to God and His Church.