

THE INTRINSIC MEANING OF SEX

One of the greatest gifts I will ever be able to give my husband is the total gift of myself. To me it would be a lie to give myself totally to someone before we've made public our permanent commitment to each other. I believe sex is a deep communication, not just between two bodies but between the two complete persons involved.

—17-year-old girl

I want a girl who's going to respect me and my values. I don't want a girl who will tease me and try to tempt away my self-control. I'm saving myself for my wife, and I hope she waits, too. I want to learn how to make love with the person I'll spend my life loving.

—18-year-old boy

Why save sex for marriage?

One reason: Your sexuality is a beautiful and unique gift. Who do you want to give it to?

Dietrich von Hildebrand, one of the great philosophers of the 20th century, writes about what makes sex special. Among the many activities of the human body, he says, sex occupies a unique position. Other bodily experiences, such as a good dinner or a good night's sleep, belong to the superficial zone of human experience.

Sex, however, is essentially deep. Our entire person, body and soul, is involved. In sex we give our whole self, intimately and personally. “The sexual act,” von Hildebrand says, “is the most vital and intense experience of which the body is capable.” That is why sex has unique emotional and spiritual effects.

When you have sex with someone, you're being as physically intimate as it is possible to be with another human being. You can't get any closer than that. In what kind of relationship does it make sense to share this kind of intimacy?

When you're married to another person, sexual union is part of a bigger union. Your sexual love expresses your total commitment. In body language, sex says to the other person, “*I give myself to you completely.*” Within the marriage commitment, that's really true. By contrast, sex before marriage is like saying, “*I give myself to you completely—but not really.*” The ultimate intimacy belongs within the ultimate commitment.

In her book *Standing With Courage* (2002), Mary-Louise Kurey writes about the meaning of sex in this way:

Each of us is meant to have the joy and self-respect that comes with knowing that “I'm worth waiting for.” Regardless of your background, age, or past choices, your sexuality is a beautiful and precious gift. It is so beautiful, it's meant for no less than the person who makes a commitment to love you fully and unconditionally in marriage.