



Love Defined

Our deepest desire is for love. In fact, God has stamped a desire for it within each person. Confusion arises, however, when it comes to the meaning of love. Portrayals of love in movies, commercials, pop-up ads, and airbrushed billboards often amount to nothing more than infatuation, lust or both.

The Power of Love

- What is love? Teens (and adults, for that matter) often believe that their love for a person of the opposite sex is measured by the strength of their emotions and attraction. While these naturally play a part, authentic love is above all a desire for the good of another person. Pope John Paul II clarifies the matter for us when he says, “The greater the *feeling of responsibility* for the person, the more true love there is.”
- There are many counterfeits of love, and one of the most common is lust, which desires the other person for one’s own pleasure. Popular culture and the contamination of pornography feed the appetite for this false “love,” which is the opposite of self-giving. God has given each of us an instinctive ability to know genuine love when we see it, even amid all the confusing messages that bombard us. Parents need to help their children to know and cherish the real thing and to reject the counterfeit of lust that turns people into objects.
- Do not underestimate your ability to reach your teen. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy surveyed teenagers, asking them to identify the number-one factor that shapes the decisions they make about their sexuality. Was it their peers, or their music? According to the teenagers, the biggest influence on their decisions regarding sexuality was their parents. Yes, that is worth repeating – *their parents*.
- Once young people understand the true meaning of love, they can apply those insights to their relationships. In doing so, the virtue of chastity begins to make sense.

The Powerful Virtue of Chastity

- True chastity has nothing to do with fear, prudishness, or repression. It does not regard pleasure as evil. Rather, chastity is an exercise of the will that refuses to allow the desire for pleasure to displace the call to love. Chastity takes the focus off self-satisfaction and strengthens a person’s ability to love, to cherish another person rather than to use them.
- Lust enslaves, but chastity brings freedom and the capacity to see and experience the beauty of God’s plan for human love.
- When young people know and understand the beauty of God’s plan for human love, they will choose to live it, because this is everything that the human heart longs for. Read a husband’s comments about what it takes to win the battle of love vs. lust in the Parent’s Guide, page. 28.

Questions to discuss with your son/daughter

1. What was the last movie you saw that portrayed true, sacrificial love? How was that shown?
2. What do you think your peers misunderstand most about chastity?