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DR. KEVIN LEMAN

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Sheet Music

Uncovering the Secrets of
Sexual Intimacy in Marriage

DR. KEVIN LEMAN



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Contents

Note to the Reader

1	<i>A Tale of Two Couples</i>	1
2	<i>A Crowded Bed</i>	23
3	<i>Shake, Rattle and Roll! Why a Good Sex Life Is Worth Striving For</i>	43
4	<i>Learning to Make Music: The First Night and Beyond</i>	61
5	<i>A Very Special Connection: Sexual Positions</i>	79
6	<i>The Big “O”</i>	91
7	<i>Oral Delights</i>	111
8	<i>For Men Only</i>	121
9	<i>For Women Only</i>	135
10	<i>Thirty-One Flavors—and None of Them Are Ice Cream!</i>	151
11	<i>Turning Off the Turnoffs</i>	169
12	<i>Sex’s Greatest Enemy</i>	183
13	<i>Your Sexual IQ</i>	191
14	<i>Too Pooped to Whoop</i>	201
15	<i>Sex in the Winter</i>	217
16	<i>A Whale of a Tail</i>	229
<i>Epilogue</i>	<i>A Very Good Gift, Indeed</i>	239
	<i>Q & A with Dr. Kevin Leman</i>	243
	<i>About Dr. Kevin Leman</i>	275
	<i>Resources by Dr. Kevin Leman</i>	277

NOTE *to the* READER

Some of what you'll read in this book may be too blunt or straightforward for your personal taste. Every person's view on sex (and his or her background, which informs thought and relational patterns) differs. However, if you're willing to forge ahead for the sake of the best marriage you can imagine, then this book is for you. It will expand and challenge your thinking about sex. Instead of just a how-to-do-it manual, it's more of a do-it-yourself look at why to do it and how to do it better.

Sheet Music: Uncovering the Secrets of Sexual Intimacy in Marriage isn't intended to make you feel guilty for what you have or haven't done, but rather to help you pinpoint what goes on in your brain and in your relationship with your spouse (or spouse-to-be) so you can have an active, fulfilling sex life.

If you're currently in premarital counseling, read chapters 1 through 4 and the "For Men Only" and "For Women Only" chapters. But please stop there—and wait to read the rest until after you're married.

A Tale of Two Couples

Jim and Karen were both virgins when they got married twenty-one years ago. Like many young couples, they had fairly unrealistic views of what sex would be like. “Hit and miss” might be a pretty good description of their sex life after the honeymoon; they never really got a handle on things until almost fifteen years into their marriage.

Here’s what happened. Jim was always looking for (and worse, thinking he had found) the “magic bullet.” He tried something new—the way he held Karen, cradled her, or tenderly touched a delicate spot—and he tuned in to her moans, thinking, *Okay, this is the key; this will unlock her sexual fury.*

While Karen really did enjoy that new touch, she learned to be conservative with her moans because once Jim heard one, he was certain to do *the exact same thing* for the next fifty

to one hundred times they made love. Karen never understood why it took one hundred times of silence to overcome one moan, but that's the way it was with Jim. He became so predictable that what once made her hotter than an August day now turned her into a glacier. Jim would just get frustrated, thinking (but never verbalizing), *I know I'm doing this right. It worked that one time! Why isn't it working now? I must not be doing it soft enough (or fast enough, or some other variation).*

When I first met with Jim, I gave him a simple assignment. "Jim," I said, "I want you to go home, look at your wife's closet, then look at yours. Tell me if you notice anything different."

"I don't have to go home to do that, Dr. Leman," he said. "I know our closets by memory."

"Okay, then. When you look at the shoes, do you notice anything different?"

"Yeah, she has fifty pairs and I have three."

"Let me guess—business shoes, tennis shoes, and work-in-the-yard shoes."

"That's right."

"Now, if you counted her outfits and then counted yours, what would you find?"

"I'd need a calculator for her outfits, but I could count mine using my ten fingers."

"What does that tell you?"

"That she likes to buy clothes?"

"Well, yes, but in regard to sex, what does it mean?"

"Well, she doesn't have many sexy outfits, if that's what you're getting at."

Seeing that subtlety wasn't Jim's strength, I decided to lay it out for him more directly. "Jim, what I'm trying to say is that your wife appears to like a little more variety than you do. She doesn't want to wear the same dress on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. In fact, she may not want to wear the same outfit every other Monday. She wants variety.

“You see, some of us guys treat sex like a football playbook. We know what we’re going to do, how we’re going to do it, and where we’re going to end up. The problem with this is that our wives soon grow bored with the routine. They could chart our movements and predict, within about ten seconds, how long we’re going to spend upstairs before we go downstairs. Your wife wants more than that.”

I saw a lightbulb go on in Jim’s mind. What I was saying was making sense.

“Here’s your job, Jim,” I continued. “Your wife will not be the same woman on Tuesday evening, sexually, that she was on Saturday morning. One night she may be up for adventure or a rushed quickie. She’ll want you just to ‘take her.’ Some mornings she may want slow, languid sex, with you taking a lot of time to convince her that she’s up for it. Your job is to figure out which way the wind is blowing on that particular day.”

It didn’t take much more than that. I didn’t need to send Jim to a “sex surrogate” (nor would I ever do such a thing). He didn’t have to watch some videos. He didn’t need to buy a hundred dollars worth of “marital aids.” In fact, Jim realized, as I wrote in another book, that sex begins in the kitchen—it’s an all-day affair. He adopted a new mind-set and, according to Karen, became a virtuoso of the bedroom.

Now, seven years later, sex permeates virtually everything Jim and Karen do. If you haven’t experienced this, you wouldn’t believe what an amazing marital “glue” good sex can be. Three years ago, Jim was trapped in a job that he hated. His boss was determined to become the most hated man east of the Mississippi. When you’re in your mid-forties, feeling trapped is about the worst feeling there is. Jim could barely force himself to go into the office, but with twins who were in middle school (with college in the not-too-distant future), and two toddlers just getting into grade school, he didn’t have a choice. Now was not the time to make a risky financial change.

One Friday Jim got an e-mail from Karen. It was the first thing he saw when he sat down in his office:

Great news! The younger kids are going to be at Grandma's house tonight and the older boys will be gone at youth group. I made reservations for eight at Palazzi's [Jim's favorite restaurant]. If you can come home by six, that'll give us a good hour and a half to enjoy the hors d'oeuvres—which I plan to be "wearing." By the way, if you look in your briefcase, you'll find a Polaroid. Consider it your predinner "menu." Can't wait to see you.
Your Karen

You know what Jim said to himself after reading that e-mail? Keep in mind, he was in a dead-end job; financial pressures were mounting. His boss was a jerk who made Jim's daily existence a living hell. But even so, Jim closed the e-mail and said to himself, "I'm the luckiest man alive."

Having a great sex life is an exhilarating experience; it can bond a husband and wife in a way that's unequaled in human experience. Knowing that your bride really does care for you, that your husband desires your body more than anything else, affirms a man and a woman in profound and multiple ways.

Jim and Karen's kids benefited greatly from this e-mail, by the way. When Jim and Karen finally picked up the younger kids from Grandma's house, Jim couldn't wait to see them. Because he was sexually satisfied, he could focus fully on being there for his kids, hearing about their day, and taking the time to tuck them into bed. And don't think that the kids didn't notice how affectionate Jim and Karen were that evening. It gave them a sense of security and happiness, making *them* think, *We're in the best family anyone could be in.*

Sexual fulfillment didn't come overnight for Jim and Karen.

But when it came, it changed everything about their home. To tell you the truth, Jim would die for Karen; he'd take a bullet for her without thinking twice. There's nothing he wouldn't do for her.



Mark and Brenda faced a sexual challenge of their own. They had been sexually active before marriage, and both admit that the sex was pretty exciting. But, predictably for couples who engage in sexual relations before marriage, sexual relations cooled off not that long after the wedding. Mark didn't seem as eager as he had been before, and Brenda was far less adventurous.

At first Mark and Brenda thought it was just the kids. They got pregnant early on in their marriage and now had two kids under the age of five. Over time, however, sex became even less frequent, until eventually it was almost an embarrassing afterthought, something the two of them did because they thought, well, they should—at least once a month, anyway.

Mark had a well-paying job and a good boss, but he was under tremendous stress. As a salesman, if Mark performed well, he was rewarded handsomely. If he fell into the bottom third, he'd be fired. He was only as good as last quarter's numbers.

Mark thought he had an account worth several hundred thousand dollars in the bag; it was just a matter of getting the company to sign. When he went into the purchaser's office, however, he was shocked to hear, "I'm sorry, Mark, but we've decided to go with someone else."

"You've got to be kidding! We've been working on this for two months, and last week you said it looked like a go. What do we need to do to earn back your business?"

"It's too late for that," the purchaser replied. "We've already signed another contract."

Stunned, Mark walked out to his car in a daze. He instinctively

answered his cell phone when it rang but immediately wished he hadn't.

"Hey, Mark!" his boss yelled through the phone. "I thought I'd take you out to that new Italian restaurant for lunch to celebrate your closing of that Andreeson account."

Mark wanted to swallow the cell phone right there.

Five hours later, after a lonely and very alcohol-laden lunch, Mark began to reflect on what his life had become. He had earned a six-figure income last year, but his job security was always on the line—as his boss reminded him when he heard the news about the Andreeson account.

How long had it been since he and Brenda had had any fun? Mark remembered the days they couldn't keep their hands off each other; now they were like two roommates sharing the same bed but not much else. Ever since the kids arrived, they seemed boxed into that (admittedly gorgeous) 3,500-square-foot home. Mark yearned for the days when he and Brenda could make the world disappear for a few hours as they got lost in each other's embrace.

Deciding to make a change, Mark called Brenda and confessed, "I've had a really crummy day. Can we just go out tonight?"

It was an emotional cry from Mark—even more than a physical one—but Brenda didn't understand. She'd had a rushed day herself. And because she'd lost touch with her husband and wasn't able to read the emotion in his request, she responded with a curt, "Mark, it's five o'clock! I can't get a baby-sitter this late. What are you thinking? You *never* give me any notice."

Mark wanted to tell Brenda that he missed her. He longed for her to be the eager woman she used to be, who was willing to cut classes to "fool around" for a little bit. But he had already stuck out his neck once today, and look where that got him! So he went on the defensive.

“Ah, forget it,” he said, and hung up the phone.

Mark stopped at a pub on the way home and shot pool until 11 P.M. He knew he’d catch a lot of flak from Brenda for being out so late, but she didn’t understand the pressure he was under.

Brenda also didn’t understand that Mark masturbated two or three times a week—and every time he did so, he felt his desire for Brenda as a person decline just a little bit more. He was tired of being reluctantly accommodated and never pursued.

For her part, Brenda was too busy with the kids to notice. In fact, she was actually thankful that Mark didn’t pressure her for sex anymore; she was too tired to even think about it. It never occurred to her that Mark was taking matters “into his own hands” and was adept enough at hiding the pornography on the computer that she never found it.

What Brenda didn’t realize was how much this sexual winter was costing them as a couple, and how, if they didn’t turn things around, they’d probably be divorced within another five years.

The kids noticed that Mommy and Daddy were rarely affectionate toward each other and often very impatient. They could sense there was something “under the surface,” a seething discontent. But because it was never brought out into the open, they lived with the fear and lack of security that such an environment creates.

Brenda became more and more focused on her kids, trying to meet her emotional emptiness through her children’s affection. Mark became more interested in work and his computer at home.

Both lived out the sad truth depicted in this anonymous poem.

The Wall

*Their wedding picture mocked them from the table,
These two whose minds no longer touched each other.*

They lived with such a heavy barricade between them

SHEET MUSIC

*That neither battering ram of words
Nor artilleries of touch could break it down.*

*Somewhere, between the oldest child's first tooth
And the youngest daughter's graduation,
They lost each other.*

*Throughout the years each slowly unraveled
That tangled ball of string called self,
And as they tugged at stubborn knots,
Each hid his searching from the other.*

*Sometimes she cried at night
And begged the whispering darkness to tell her who she was.*

*He lay beside her, snoring like a hibernating bear,
Unaware of her winter.*

*Once, after they had made love,
He wanted to tell her how afraid he was of dying,
But, fearing to show his naked soul,
He spoke instead about the beauty of her breasts.*

*She took a course in modern art,
Trying to find herself in colors splashed upon a canvas,
Complaining to other women about men who are insensitive.*

*He climbed into a tomb called "The Office,"
Wrapped his mind in a shroud of paper figures,
And buried himself in customers.*

*Slowly, the wall between them rose,
Cemented by the mortar of indifference.*

*One day, reaching out to touch each other
They found a barrier they could not penetrate,
And recoiling from the coldness of the stone,
Each retreated from the stranger on the other side.*

A Tale of Two Couples

*For when love dies, it is not in a moment of angry battle,
Nor when fiery bodies lose their heat.
It lies panting, exhausted,
Expiring at the bottom of a wall it could not scale.*



Two couples. Two stories. One reality. If you think sex isn't important, you are sadly mistaken. Many people have been wounded by sex and hurt by sexual memories. (We'll talk about this in a later chapter.) But if you're married, sex will be one of the most important parts of your life, whether you want it to be that way or not. If you don't treat sex this way—as a matter of supreme importance—you're shortchanging yourself, your spouse, and your kids.

This might, in fact, be a hard book to read. It certainly was a hard book to write, because in our society today we have a difficult time talking about sex. Oh, we *joke* about sex, degrading it through filthy stories, movies, and magazines, but we never talk about marital sex in the way the Creator designed it. Marital sex—the most important and only appropriate kind, in my view—gets ignored, and couples pay a fearful price when this sad reality happens.

But when you give people permission to talk about sex in a nonthreatening environment, you can't shut them up! Once they get going, they want to talk about sex because they know that sex is a powerful force in our married lives.

My hope is that this book will expand and challenge your thinking about sex. It's not just a how-to-do-it manual; the physical mechanics aren't that difficult. This is more of a do-it-yourself look at why to do it and how to do it better. I want to reawaken in you the shared experience of enjoying this wonderful gift on your journey with your mate. This is not a book that should make you feel guilty, but rather it should

expand your thinking and the possibility that you too can have an active, fulfilling sex life with the one you love.

This book may not have all the answers, but it does have a lot of them. I'm not a sexual therapist; I'm a psychologist. While we'll talk about the physical side of sex, my specialty is with what goes on in your brain and in your relationship. That's where most marriages need to be healed first.

Besides, the physical aspect will usually take care of itself if the relationship is healthy. If you decide to become sexually adventurous as a couple, you're not going to do things perfectly, anyway; you're going to fail, and hopefully, you'll laugh about it when you do. Nobody's sex life is such that every experience is a ten. You may have to be satisfied with regular eights or sixes and even an occasional three.

But this book is written for you, as a couple, to help you understand what a unique and wonderful gift you are to each other, as well as the unique and wonderful ways you can express your love in a very physical and pleasurable sense.

From my experience of working with thousands of couples, I've become convinced that this wonderful gift of sex makes everything nicer. A couple's sex life is usually a microcosm of the marriage. Every now and then a couple has a great sex life with a poor marriage, but this is the rarity, something you see only every couple of years. Most often, if the marriage is on the rocks, sex will follow it to the bottom.

OUR DEEPEST DESIRES

I want to say a word to the men right at the start of this book. I know, I know—you can't wait until we start getting to the really good parts. But first let me put marital sex into a completely different context. You need to know that every day a woman internally asks her husband, *Do you really love me? Do you really care?*

How does she measure that love? How does she know she's

truly cared for? It's usually not in the bedroom. If anything turns off a woman, it's the feeling that all her husband cares about is sex. If a wife thinks her main role is to be a willing recipient of her husband's sexual advances, she feels demeaned and disrespected.

Men, if your attitude has become, *Well, honey, are you gonna put out tonight or not?* you don't realize how much you're missing. With that attitude all you're going to get—at best—is an accommodating wife, but never an eager one. I can give you the best sexual technique in the world, but with that attitude, your sexual life is still going to wind up in the pits.

What warms a woman up is when her husband helps around the house, picks up after himself, helps with the children, makes arrangements for dates, and overall *cares for her*. If a husband consistently and graciously does this without acting like a martyr, he's going to find, six times out of ten, that his wife is ready and eager to enjoy an active and fulfilling love life. It will be a natural response to a lifestyle of sincere affection.

Let's talk about the six in ten. Women, this might surprise you, but even more than your husband wants to have sex with you for his own sexual relief, the truth is, he wants to please you even more than he wants to be pleased. It might seem like it's all about him, but what he really wants, emotionally, is to see how much you enjoy the pleasure he can give you. If he fails to do that, for any reason, he'll end up feeling inadequate, lonely, and unloved. Most of us men want to be our wives' heroes.

It's my theory that the little boys we men once were, we still are. We still want to please the primary woman in our life. When we were six, that meant pleasing Mommy; when we're twenty-six (or thirty-six, or forty-six, or sixty-six), it's our bride.

When sex dies in a marriage, a man loses something very important to him—the knowledge that he can please his wife

physically. And a woman loses the satisfaction that she has a man who is enthralled with her beauty.

Because sex is so intimate to who we are as men and women, it becomes intricately tied up with the smallest element of every marriage. If a couple spent just ten minutes describing their sex life to me, I'd have a pretty good handle on what's happening in the rest of their marriage. So while I want to help you improve your sexual technique, I also want to remind you that sex is part of a *relationship*.

GOURMET SEX

Just about anybody can “biologically” perform the act of sexual intercourse, just as any five-year-old can make a peanut-butter sandwich. But if you want a gourmet meal, you need to find a chef.

For example, anybody can cook a fish. You can take the slippery sucker out of the water, not bother to gut it or descale it but just throw it in a pan without any spices or preparation, and it'll cook. You'll be able to bite through those scales, pick the innards out of your teeth, but still get some healthy fish to swallow. You've cooked a fish.

But it's going to taste fishy if you do it that way, and good fish does not taste fishy. I know what I'm talking about here. My Swedish-Norwegian uncles were fishermen. Man, did they know how to prepare a fish!

I remember one time as a young kid, my uncle asked me, “Do you like to eat fish, boy?”

“No.”

“You'd like this fish.”

“No, thank you,” I said in my squeaky boy's voice. “I don't eat fish. I don't like fish.”

He smiled a knowing smile, then took out a nice shiny quarter. “Would you try just one bite if I gave you this?”

Back in those days, a quarter could get you a whole lot

more than a gumball, so I took the offer. But I didn't stop at one bite; I ate thirteen of those little suckers. I'd never tasted anything so good in my entire life!

The difference is, my uncle knew what he was doing. He carefully filleted the fish, expertly removing all the bones. Then he put the fish in saltwater, which draws out the blood and other things you don't want in there. Then he dipped the fish in pancake batter and fried it up just right.

A chef isn't a "born" cook. He goes to school, studies the art of cooking, masters the use of herbs and flavors and presentation, and then experiments with what works best. A good sexual "chef" does the same thing. A loving husband will soon learn that presentation means everything to a woman. To truly engage a wife's senses, a husband needs to be aware of how he presents himself for sex. Because men have hair triggers, presentation often gets ignored, and the man is clumsy, awkward, or even offensive in the way he approaches his wife for sexual intimacy.

Trust me, men: How you present your "hunk of burning love" really matters, and it's something that needs to be put in context. Your wife wants to know you're a good father, as well as a kind and generous person, every bit as much as she wants to know you can touch all the right places.

Too many married couples settle for second best. The husband is willing to use his wife for biological release, and the wife may be willing to "accommodate" her husband just to avoid his incessant nagging (and, sometimes, outright begging). But that's not what either of them truly desires. Neither person is fulfilled when sex is desperately asked for and only grudgingly given.

So take the plunge! Joyfully move from "peanut butter and jelly sex" to gourmet intimacy. Don't settle for less than God has intended. Sex is one of the most amazing things God ever thought up—but sex this good doesn't come naturally to any

one of us. We have to become willing to practice how to be a better lover; we need to spend time thinking of ways to keep sex fresh and fun; we even need to study our spouse to discover just what fulfills them sexually.

Some of you might be asking, “But Doc, is it worth the effort?” Is it worth the effort?! If you could see into the future and experience just a taste of what a fulfilling sex life can do for your marriage, my guess is that you’d be willing to invest a whole lot more time than you’re investing now. You’d be begging me to tell you more.

In addition to gourmet sex, there’s what I like to call “designer” sex.

DESIGNER SEX

“Do all men think about sex all the time?” a woman asked me in obvious exasperation after I’d talked about the differences between men and women.

“Well, not *all* the time,” I said, noting the relief cover her face until I added, “sometimes we think about food *and* sex. Occasionally we think about killing deer and breaking ninety on the golf course, but pretty much our minds go back to sex.”

“Aren’t there any men who are holy and have pure minds?” she went on.

See, that’s the problem right there: She’s assuming that when I say most men think about sex a large percentage of the time, I mean we’re thinking *dirty* thoughts. Some people of faith think God and sex have about as much in common as football and ice dancing. Just because a man thinks about sex a lot doesn’t mean he’s thinking impure thoughts. If he’s imagining what another woman (besides his wife) looks like naked, or how good she’d be in bed, then yes, he’s polluting his mind. But if he’s imagining how good it would feel to rub massage oil all over his wife later that night while on his way to giving her a body-to-body massage, he’s being as pure as

an inner-city mission worker serving a bowl of soup to the homeless.

Who is the giver of all good gifts? God. Sex is a gift from God and a commandment from God. When God tells us to be “fruitful and multiply,” he’s not talking about apples and cloning. He’s talking about having sexual intercourse and giving birth to babies.

Author Stephen Schwambach writes:

Anybody who has ever experienced great lovemaking instinctively knows the truth: Sex is too good to have just happened. It didn’t evolve as the result of some cosmic accident. Something this exquisite had to have been lovingly, brilliantly, creatively designed.

If an atheist ever comes up to you and demands proof that there is a God, all you have to answer is one word: “Sex.” Give him a day to think about it. If at the end of that day he remains unconvinced, then he has just revealed far more about his sex life—or the lack thereof—than he ever intended!

God created sex. Doesn’t that tell you a lot about who God really is? Among other things, it tells you that He is ingenious.¹

“Designer sex” is sex as the Creator intended it; sex that uses his manual as a guide. Observant Jews and Christians both believe that sex as God designed it is sex only within marriage.

Why do you think God reserves sex for marriage? I believe that one of the reasons (which gets very little attention, unfortunately) is that good sex is not easy and it’s very personal. Think about it: A man is given the daunting task of trying to

¹Stephen and Judith Schwambach, *For Lovers Only* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1990), 127.

read how to set his bride's sails in changing winds. Sometimes she wants to run free and loose; other times she wants to tack back and forth, keeping things in check. If the husband is going to be the captain of her heart, he has to learn how to read the winds, and that takes a lot of time and a lot of experience *with the same woman*. Experience with other women will lead him astray more than help him, because every woman is unique in her desire and pleasure.

Think about it this way: If you've had sex with nine women, put nine watches on your arm—five on one arm and four on the other. Now let me ask you, what time is it? It becomes so complicated trying to average the nine watches that you're much better off having just one watch, even if that timepiece is off by a couple minutes.

In the same way, the wife is also charged with understanding her husband so well that she intuitively knows when her husband needs her to initiate sex or when he needs her to allow herself to be vanquished in a holy and profound way. She should actually study her husband's spoken and unspoken sexual needs and desires as vigorously as she did any textbook before a major test in high school or college. After all, this isn't just an academic exercise. This is her marriage!

Designer sex is about more than familiarity, however. It's also about respect. I've heard a lot of women say some very hurtful and disrespectful things about men in general and their husbands in particular: "He's always ready for sex with whomever or whatever." "He thinks through his fly." A woman minimizes a man when she says that all he cares about is sex; she betrays her ignorance about the complexity of a man's soul and the interconnectedness of our spirituality and physical being. What she doesn't realize is that sex represents many different things to a man. A number of them are emotional and spiritual, having nothing to do with the physical. I'm your average Joe who doesn't have eight buddies to talk

about life with, like most women do. All I've got is my wife, and if she's too busy with the kids and I repeatedly get sent into the dugout, I tell myself, *She doesn't care. She doesn't know what I'm up against.*

Sometimes we men do act like little boys. I'm not saying that's good or admirable, but that's the way we are. You're married to a real man, not an ideal stoic—and if he is denied sexual fulfillment, it will affect him in more ways than a woman could possibly understand.

One of the most loving and holy things you can do in marriage is to provide a sexually fulfilling pursuit of your husband or wife. Therefore, without apology, this is going to be the most explicit book I've ever written (which is why, I have to confess, it has been harder to write than any other). I want to teach you how to be an extravagant lover. I want your spouse to go to sleep with a smile on his or her face thinking, *I've got to be the happiest guy/girl in the world!*

But before you read on, let me give you a few warnings.

WARNING!

I'm not ashamed to say that sex is one of my favorite subjects. There is little I don't like about sex between a married husband and wife. Whenever someone asks me, "Dr. Leman, what's the best position for sex?" I always respond, "*Any position is good if it gets the job done!*"

Notice I didn't say that any *sexual experience* is good, because I believe that any sexual experience outside of marriage is ultimately destructive. If you are not married (or not going through premarital counseling—more on this in a moment), then this book is not for you. The advice I'm giving about exploring creativity in sexuality is meant for committed couples, not for those who are living together or sleeping together outside of marriage.

If you are having sex before marriage, you are ultimately

threatening your own happiness and marital satisfaction. The research couldn't be clearer:

1. A national study of over 1,800 married couples indicated that the probability of getting a divorce was twice as high for couples who had cohabited prior to marriage compared to those couples who had not. In addition, cohabitation prior to marriage related to lower levels of subsequent marital interaction and higher levels of marital disagreement and instability.²
2. A study of 3,884 Canadian women indicated that women who had cohabited before marriage were 50 percent more likely to get a divorce than women who had not cohabited before marriage. Of the cohabiting women, 35 percent could be expected to divorce within fifteen years of marriage compared to only 19 percent among those who had not cohabited prior to marriage.³
3. A study of 4,300 Swedish women ages twenty to forty-four indicated that those who had cohabited before marriage had divorce rates that were 80 percent higher than women who had not cohabited before marriage.⁴
4. A study using a nationally representative sample of 1,235 women ages twenty to thirty-seven indicated that married women who had cohabited prior to marriage were 3.3 times more likely to have sex with someone other than their husband than married women who had not cohabited prior to marriage. Single women who cohabited were 1.7 times more likely to have a secondary

²Alan Booth and David Johnson, "Premarital Co-habitation and Marital Success," *Journal of Family Issues* 9 (1988): 261–270. This and several other citations in this section are taken from Wade Horn, *Father Facts* (Gaithersburg, Md.: The National Fatherhood Initiative, third edition, no date given), 46ff.

³T. R. Balakrishnan et al., "A Hazard Model of the Covariates of Marriage Dissolution in Canada," *Demography* 24 (1987): 395–406.

⁴Neil Bennett, Ann Klimas Blanc, and David E. Bloom, "Commitment and the Modern Union: Assessing the Link Between Cohabitation and Subsequent Marital Instability," *American Sociological Review* 53 (1988): 127–138.

sex partner than single women who did not live with their partners.⁵

So then, if you are living with someone outside of marriage, I suggest you move out and start over. The two of you may still make it work, but if you can't make it work outside of marriage without being sexually active, odds are that the marriage will soon fall apart anyway.

Now some of you are thinking, *This Dr. Leman guy is nuts—a holdover from the Victorian era!* Not so. Before you close this book and go on with life, let me remind you that today's average marriage lasts just seven years. This is a pathetic shadow of what marriage used to be. Obviously, what we're doing today in our society—sex on the first or second date—isn't working for us. It may help singles cope with sexual frustration in the short run, but it destroys meaningful marriages in the long run.

Maybe we ought to try it a new way.

After unmarried people, the second group I want to warn away from this book consists of those people who are uncomfortable talking about sex in a forthright manner. I have talked about sex in front of some adults who practically attempted to crawl under the floor when I had participants start to list slang words for the male genitalia. (You wouldn't believe how silent it got when I followed up with, "And now, what about the female genitalia?")

I'll be honest with you: Probably everybody will be offended by at least one thing I say in this book. If you don't like one particular point, that's okay. You paid for this book if you didn't get it out of the library, so rip out the page, throw it away, and focus on the rest. It won't bug me—but I owe it to you to be straightforward and provocative.

Some people hear the word *sex* and think, *All right! It's about*

⁵Renata Forste and Koray Tanfer, "Sexual Exclusivity among Dating, Cohabiting, and Married Women," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58 (1996): 33–47.

time. Give it to me straight, Leman, and don't hold back on any of the details! These folks are like my best friend Moonhead, who likes to remind me, "Leman, it's not good sex if you don't need to take a shower afterwards." They would be offended only if I dabbled in clichés to avoid sounding provocative.

Other people can barely mouth the word *sex* and keep a straight face. I understand this. Few things are more private and more personal than sexual activity between a husband and a wife. These people think it is impossible to even mention the basics of sexual anatomy and activity without getting into bad taste or immorality.

I want to warn you up front: I'm going to be very explicit and frank in this book. If specific descriptions of sexual acts offend you or you find discussions of sexual creativity within marriage to be distasteful, please know that it isn't my intention to cause an offense. The church is filled with many people from many different backgrounds, and we need all of them. However, I encourage you to cherish your spouse enough to risk opening the door to exploring new ways to increase your sexual intimacy. Although some statements in this book may make you uncomfortable, keep reading with an open mind—take the challenge to think creatively about this important aspect of your marriage.

Finally, allow me, as a psychologist, to give a word of warning to premarital couples who will be using this book. I recommend that you save the second half for the honeymoon. You will find it helpful to read the chapters up through the one dealing with your first night together, because that information will serve you well on your honeymoon. You'll also benefit from the chapters entitled "For Men Only" and "For Women Only." But please stop there until after you're married. Reading together explicit descriptions of sexual activities when you cannot morally engage in those activities is a temptation you don't need to bring into your life at this point.

Trust me on this one: Couples rarely suffer from a lack of information as much as they suffer from a lack of innocence in the marital bed. You can make up for a lack of information after you're married; the lack of innocence will mark your relationship for life. Give each other the best wedding gift and the best honeymoon available: pure bodies, pure love, and pure intentions. Once you understand the basics you'll have plenty to hold you until after the wedding, at which point you can feast to your heart's delight—with God's blessing and good pleasure! So bring the book along for the honeymoon—but be willing to wait until then.

If you're still reading, welcome aboard! I can't wait to get going.