

## “Real Sex” book review

by Audrey Kelly

Let’s face it. I, a nineteen-year-old single woman, am not going to talk to my forty-five-year-old male pastor about sex. I would be uncomfortable with him (or anyone over the age of twenty-five, not to mention male,) knowing my sexual desires and struggles- those illicit kisses, that explicit movie scene that I would really like to emulate, or the times when I wish there were a tactful (and Christian) way to make a “booty call” for some illicit explicitness.

Lauren Winner, however, thinks that I should be talking about these things—in church, no less! In her book, *Real Sex: the naked truth about chastity*, she proposes a radical and somewhat reformist view of the Church’s attitude towards sexuality, where believers can be open and accountable to each other in their sexual activity and struggles. She envisions a Church where all Christians—both married and unmarried—can look at married sex as a healthy and wonderful thing, created by God. However, she wants the Church to be a place where unmarried people are be welcomed and embraced. She wants Christians to recognize that sex is not an end unto itself, and that humans can be happy and healthy *without* sex, as single adults.

Lauren Winner’s vision for Christianity is radical, in the most positive sense of the word. Her vision for spiritual and sexual accountability requires a community of believers who are willing to hold each other responsible, and mentors with depth and bravery. She calls for a pastoral community of believers that can talk comfortably not only about healthy sex (or lack thereof), but also about finances, time management, entertainment, physical fitness, friendships, resource use, and parenting.

This sort of community, unfortunately, assumes a level of Christian commitment that is almost nonexistent in the life of an average American church member. She has had opportunities to interact with a vibrant body of believers, but not all Christians (and especially Christian college students) do. I realized, as I was reading *Real Sex* that I cannot implement her meditations on Christian chastity until I am a part of a community of believers that is truly committed to following God.

It opened my eyes to void of true Christian fellowship that the Church should be filling. I realized that I don’t even know my pastor, or have any true and mature spiritual mentor. If I am fortunate enough to receive a message about sexuality in my church, it is from the pulpit, when my (forty-five-year-old male) pastor preaches to the entire congregation. These messages usually have something to do with homosexuality, not the virtue of sexual purity or the blessings of married sex. The only time that I talk to this man is at the end of the service, when he shakes my hand and asks ‘how are you?’ If I can lie to him with a straight face when I am having a horrible day, failed a midterm, or am doubting the goodness of God, there is no way that I will tell him what I did on Friday night when no one was watching.

I realized that I desperately need a spiritual leader and community that I can be honest with, but my current habits of church attendance and lack of committed spiritual community are not conducive to honesty or commitment. While enlightening and convicting about my attitude towards sex, Lauren Winner’s book was far more than that. It was a wake-up call to the Church’s stagnation, alienation, and individualization. It reminded me of the way the Christian experience should be, and I realized that I could not engage in true chastity until I was engaged in community.

Maybe, instead of *Real Sex: the naked truth about chastity*, we need *Real Church: the naked truth about discipleship*. Sadly, though, I doubt that it would be as popular.