

## Unhooked and Set Free (Part 1)

by Linda Bartlett

Maura is a young and spirited woman who invited me into her life. She seems to welcome the experience of age and expresses the need for a “mother” figure. Maura is intelligent. More mature than most her age. She has a tangible dream and works hard in college. Maura displays all the normal feelings and emotions that come with being female. But, there is more. Wisdom speaks to Maura through her conscience. The answers to my questions consistently reveal that Maura delights in all things of God... but, she is “hooked” to her boyfriend.

Her boyfriend’s words of love cause Maura to feel special so, when he has demands, she tries to please. The warmth of his embrace encourages her loyalty, but his lack of commitment makes her vulnerable. She clings to the relationships with hope that it will change.

Maura and I have talked at length about who and Whose she is. Her eyes glisten when I explain that because of what Jesus Christ has done she is a daughter of God. If too much time passes between our visits, I text with an invitation to walk or meet for lunch. Rarely does Maura refuse. She’s happy to bring me up to date, explaining her work and studies. When the conversation turns to relationships, Maura smiles when she talks about her dad. “I’m happy when I’m with him. I feel safe at home.” But, when I inquire about her boyfriend, Maura’s smile always fades.

One day, Maura seemed less confident. More sad. She uttered not one positive or hopeful word about her boyfriend. “So,” I asked, “why do you stay with him?” Her shoulders drooped. She stared past me with no particular focus. She sighed, then almost seemed to shutter. “He isn’t good for me,” she confessed. “But, it’s so very strange. After we’ve been—you know—together, the harder it is to think about breaking up.”

The honesty of our friendship compelled me to take a deep breath... then look into her eyes. “Maura, you’ve fallen into a bad habit... and now you’re hooked.” Tears that flowed were evidence of the tug-of-war for Maura’s heart but also for her mind and soul.

Maura is “hooked” not because she is uneducated, but because she is wrongly educated. Maura is “hooked” not because she missed out on “Sexuality 101” but because she was encouraged at a young age to “be comfortable with her sexuality.” The well-worn saying goes, “Our parents were too quiet about sex. We need to inform our kids.” All the information in the world, however, does not necessarily help children and teens. The “feeling” part of the brain is in fine working order at a young age, but the judgment part of the brain (pre-frontal cortex) is not fully developed until the late teens or early twenties.

Maura is “hooked” not because she doesn’t have a protective dad, but because in his fear he believes that he’s helping his “sexual” daughter by putting her on the Pill and shooting her up with Gardasil. But does he know why his daughter’s young body isn’t ready for sex? Does he know what affect years of chemicals and hormones will have on his daughter? Does he know

that he is needed to set boundaries because his daughter lacks good judgment when oxytocin floods her brain?

Maura is “hooked” by a culture that daily sexualizes children. Maura is convinced that sexy clothes and sensually intimate behavior are normal and expected. But if she is so normal, why is she so unhappy? Why does her heart ache? Why does her soul seem troubled? Maura is in conflict with herself because she lacks vital information beginning with the simple fact that male and female are different.

Maura is “hooked” by the claws of militant feminists who deny gender differences. They have worked long and hard to minimize, manage and misrepresent everything that is girlish and womanly. No one informed Maura that her female brain predisposes her to yearn for love, understanding, connection, and communication. No one informed Maura that her chemistry promotes attachment and trust of her boyfriend. No one told Maura that her female wiring causes her to take risks by overlooking her boyfriend’s shortcomings. Maura’s unique physiological vulnerability to intimate behavior was never explained because that would be a “gender stereotype.”

Maura knows her relationship isn’t what it should be. As a Christian, she knows it isn’t what God desires for her. But, even if she wasn’t a Christian, she would sense that something was wrong. What is wrong is that educators in “sexuality” have wrongly identified Maura as a “sexual being”. But she is so much more than a body overwhelmed by feelings, urges and desires. She is a head that can think, a heart that can love and a soul that will endure beyond this lifetime.

As Maura’s friend and mentor, I have promised not to fail her by repeating foolishness. There is one truth for Maura... and all the rest of us. It is the truth of our design. Divine design. This design by God is evidenced by our anatomy, pure biology and credible scientific study. It is evidenced by the consequences of our choices and behaviors.

The bottom line for me is that Maura matters. So, we are discussing a new life — unhooked and set free. Set free to be more of what God created her to be.

Recommended reading:

*The Failure of Sex Education in the Church: Mistaken Identity, Compromised Purity* (Bartlett, Amazon)

*Unprotected* (Grossman, Amazon)

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