

Book 12

Major Decisions



**ALIVE TO
THE WORLD**

Topics of personal
development and
sexual education

 **AFF**
Alliance for the Family

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THE WORLD

Book 12

Major
Decisions

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Alliance for the Family

AFF
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Dear students,

In this last book of the "Alive to the World" series we will find two friends that we know from the previous book, Betty and Juan. Betty and Juan, just like all kids your age, start to seriously deal with decision making. At ages 17 and 18, which is the end of our high school years, future presents us with a whole array of options. Amongst them, we'll find all kinds of alternatives: good, bad, you name it. You will have to decide what your goals will be and how to pursue them.

By paying close attention to what happens in the story you will find the opportunity to learn more about the different options that life normally presents young people with when having to decide which road to take. Making major decisions requires having the skills that will allow you to see what will be best for you based on your own abilities. In this book, we have included the most important of what we consider to be a person's major decisions with the hope that you acquire the abilities that will allow you to carry them through. You will see how the characters in the story utilize these abilities when having to decide whom to court, what to study, what career to pursue, or what job to take. We will also be presenting situations in which you will be prompted to consider family planning, inclusive of an understanding of what will lead women to a fulfilling life that will include work, maternity and motherhood, and of how having children can impact their lives.

Other topics that need to be considered during this stage are those of our personal finances, our participation in community projects, and of how to take full advantage of each one of our own unique talents. We will also address ethical behavior - in a world filled with complications, some bio-ethical issues, and the balance that there needs to be between a person's career and their home life.

We thank all the professionals, parents and teenagers who, in various countries, provided us with their support, advice and experiences to make real this Series that began as a dream and which now, at the beginning of the third Millennium, will help young people to grow in their ability to love their countries, their communities, their families and themselves.

Chapter 1
Sexuality and a Mature Love

John was the kind of kid you never forget. He was a good friend and partner. Almost everyone liked him, especially Betty, his girlfriend (or lovebird, as they often called one another).

But John's story this year didn't get off to a good start. As a matter of fact, at the beginning of the school year he was still very upset over his father's death after a painful illness. For many this may sound completely heartbreaking, but in John's favor we must say that his father had been a good example of patience and serenity and he knew, deep in his heart, that his "old man" was now in a better place.

John loved his "old man" very much. I think anyone would have felt the same after his death: disheartened and a little gloomy. At times John didn't want to do anything and felt that nothing mattered. Luckily Betty was there to help him. She was always by his side. She proved to be an excellent friend, although she wasn't the only one. There was also Andrew with whom he used to spend a lot of his time, as well as Jack and others who came along. Everyone helped the family get ahead. They spent long hours with them at their house, sometimes without even talking. The important thing was to be there and to show consideration for them.

Helen, John's mother, proved her courage. At first she was distressed and cried a lot, which was to be expected, to say the least. Her husband was no longer there and she missed him. But little by little she changed her attitude. She accepted his absence and gained strength by looking to the future she had to provide for John and his brothers and sister. She wasn't alone; however, she had the family (aunts and uncles, and grandparents) looking after them.

With the help of family and friends she was able to get a job. This would help her get over her grief and at the same time it would help make ends meet. Misfortune often moves people's hearts and brings out the best in them. It's the other side of pain and John will never in his lifetime forget the marvelous gestures on the part of his loved ones.

John's father had been a writer. He could remember seeing his father at his desk covered with papers as he would spend a lot of time reading. He enjoyed doing research, learning about things, and later passing this knowledge on to others. They were never a rich family, but for John the memory of his father working hard was the best one of all.

One day, after classes, John decided to organize the den where he found notes, book reviews, and his father's ideas and discussions with other writers.

Then he ran into a different book. It had a hard blue cover and no title. He skimmed through it. It was handwritten and with catchy titles. "Children, the product of love," "Women's Fulfillment," "Natural, legal, and religious marriage," "Preparing for marriage: Courtship," "The challenges of bioethics."

The first title immediately caught his attention: "Sexuality and a mature love." He sat on the floor near the door and began reading.

When dealing with the topic of sexuality, the terms must be spelled out, because many people talk about them yet few have anything sensible to say. This is why I always begin by explaining the terms.

"So, Dad also wrote about sex," John thought with a bit of mischief.

In the case of sexuality, its purpose is essential.

Sexuality

Sexuality is that group of features that encompasses the entire human being, in the unit of his/her body and mind, making us a man or a woman.

From this, an inner force is developed, one that is associated with feelings, with the capacity to love and with the ability to relate to others.

It is the expression of a human



being as a whole. The specific ways of feeling, loving, and reacting, which may differ in men and women.

Aspects of Sexuality

*Sexuality encompasses many aspects of our lives, **all to be integrated by true love:***

Our **IDENTITY: we are male or female human beings from the moment we are conceived. This can be proven by the genes, XX for woman and XY for male.*

****COMMUNICATION**: we have different ways of expressing our feelings and ideas.*

****GROWTH** a 7-year-old child's body and way of thinking are different from those of a 20 year-old.*

At a certain time, **LIFE CAN BE PASSED ON: The fact that a sexual relationship may involve the birth of another human being proves how important it is.*

This way of viewing things is very different from what is normally seen in the media or what is heard from friends. The topic is taken much too lightly. For some reason it's diminished and only a part of it is pointed out, the part that involves the sexual act, overlooking the fact that the rest is very important.

I often ask myself how some people can forget that the way of being of men and women is part of their sexuality. I also can't understand how there are people who believe that love and the way we use our bodies are two separate things when love is our human essence. We can't expect to understand human beings unless we begin with the premise that a person's greatest wish is to be happy and that only a person who learns to truly love achieves happiness. Our bodies are meant to be an instrument of our love.

This is why sexuality is part of a person as a whole. The sexual act is only one aspect of sexuality, not all of it. Only by understanding it will we be able to deal with all of sexuality's problems. This is the way one author defines sexuality:

The sexual act is only one aspect of sexuality, not all of it.

Definition of Sexuality

"A dynamism that creates and integrates a human being as a person, as a partner, and as a member of society and which is powered by true and authentic love."

Sexuality is an inner energy every man or woman has as a tool to get to know themselves better, and turn to others in order to give and receive love. Love is given and received in many ways, one of which is through the sexual act. But the sexual act can turn into a way of using another person. Using a person is as distant from love as can be. In that case, I ask myself what then is the role of sexuality? Could it be that there is a lot of sexual action and little sexuality?

The question is not, "What is the best way to use my body? What we really need to focus on is, "How can I fully love my partner, even with my body? What can I do to be in harmony with myself and then give myself to my partner? What do I need to do to love in a mature way? How can I find true happiness with another person?"

Sex Education

*I've always liked the definition of sex education that a person who dealt with the topic once taught me: "Sex education is **everything that a person needs to learn from the time they are born so they can live with a partner, happily and permanently.**"*

The first chapter ended with this sentence. Once again John reminisced about how much his father knew. But more than anything he remembered that he was a good man. They had their disagreements more than once. The thing that bothered him most was having to admit that his father was right. But that was history. Now he was glad to admit that his father **was a very knowledgeable person.**

Then suddenly a piece of paper fell out of the book. It had his father's handwriting on it, but it had nothing to do with the notes he was reading. It seemed more like a page from a personal diary.

"May 7

I've just finished the first compilation of my notes. "Facing Key Decisions." I've collected many things here that my children will find helpful. I might even write a book for them.

I want them to know that I love them very much, that I want to look out for their future and share my experiences with them. The notes I've just finished writing convey all this. In the future, part of me will be in this book and this is how I will get to be with my children. This might help them understand the love I feel for them just because they are my children. I have put my heart and my mind into these notes. My heart beats for John, Paul, Mary and James."

John couldn't control his emotions. From that moment this book, "The Blue Book," would be his most guarded treasure.

That afternoon he cried, alone in the den. He cried emotionally, from his heart, until he could cry no more and fell asleep. When he woke up a few hours later, he felt much better.

Chapter 2

Life is a Gift as Well as Hard Work: Pursuing Happiness

John was very happy with his discovery. In some ways his father was with him and that helped lessen his pain. As soon as he got to school he looked for Betty and showed her his new treasure.

She was his best friend (and girlfriend) and he wanted to share with her what his father had passed on to him.

"I found this in his den," he said as he showed her the book.

"Let me see. Hey, this is pretty interesting! Can I borrow it next period? My teacher is absent. I want to read and see what it's all about.

John gave her a cautionary look and finally let her borrow it. Their relationship hadn't encountered any problems since they started going out, but things had basically boiled down to being with John in his time of suffering, which normally brings people closer together. Things had begun returning to normal and she was afraid that something would go wrong. This was why she was interested in reading the book.

She read the first chapter eagerly. Certainly she had often thought that sexuality was much more than having sex. Now she began to understand why. The last question caught her attention: How can I find true happiness with another person? This question made her continue reading, to see what else she could find in John's father's notes.

Life is a gift as well as hard work: pursuing happiness

These days, because of my illness, I have had time to think. It's inevitable. Knowing that I will soon die has made me take a good look at my life, evaluate it and rate it. Rate what I have and what I've accomplished in all this time. I love my family. In the past I was too busy to realize how fortunate I am and be grateful ... now I know why so few people are. The key to understanding this is to take a look inside and discover what really matters so that we can plan our future accordingly. Now I understand that life, despite its complications, is a gift that contains a task in itself: the pursuit of happiness. Happiness ... and everyone's ultimate question: How to reach it?

The first job is to get to know ourselves, and understand our human nature.

*There is a deep-seated union between body and mind. Between our "outer self" - what we can see with these eyes - and our "inner self" - what we cannot see with these eyes. **Our body represents our whole being** (Sketch 2.A)*

When you caress someone, you are not just "touching a body." You are touching or caressing someone: a person. When someone you love touches you, they are not just touching "a part of you."

They are touching you, a person. It is precisely a person's wholeness that makes the feeling



HUMAN PERSON

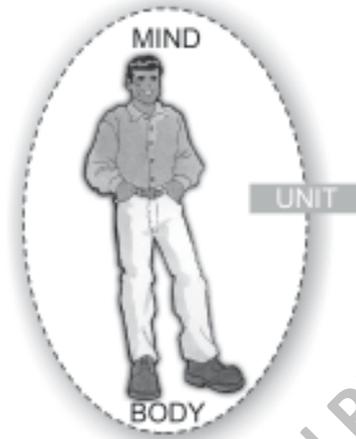


Diagram 2A

expressed through that caress become something special. But that same wholeness makes you deeply respect the other person.

*Our human body is as important as we are. This only verifies the fact that sexuality encompasses the person as a whole. **When there is sexual intercourse, it may seem that it involves two bodies. But this is actually not true: it involves two human beings.***

This is why we must all respect our own body and other people's bodies, because we are all human beings. Each body is personal; a body is a person and not a thing. A person is a "self" in another person. It's the same as what you are inside, but in another person, outside of you. We always demand respect. But most importantly we must respect others with the same eagerness. One of the greatest ways to show others respect is by respecting their body, their intimacy and their sexuality. Don't ever allow anyone to use you and don't ever use anyone to gain pleasure. That would simply be dishonorable.

*From the union of **body** and mind, three levels of action emerge: the spiritual, the physical and the psychological. (Diagram 2.B)*

HUMAN PERSON

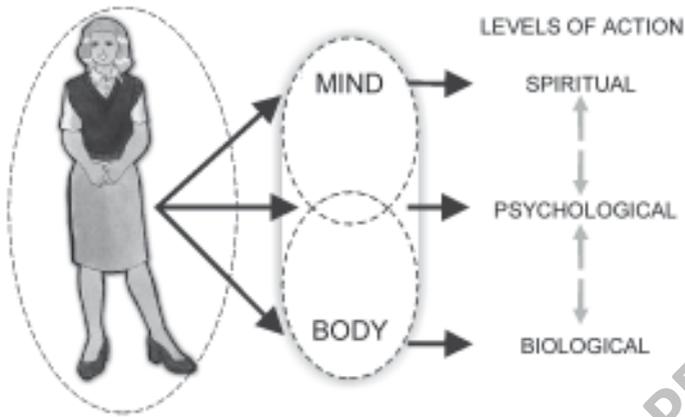


Diagram 2B

The spiritual level mainly involves the functions of thinking and loving.

The physical level is more external. Free will is not needed here. It includes things that "just happen" like our digestion, our breathing, the beating of our hearts, etc.

The psychological level is a combination of the two: it partially involves our free will. It is the level of our feelings, frame of mind, sense of humor, subtle reactions, etc.

This level can be understood with one example: fear. We'll say, "I am afraid of something." We cannot control the reflex of fear, it seems to "come from outside." At the same time, it isn't completely preventable or beyond our control: we can control our reaction to it. We can contain our fear, and if necessary, act in spite of it. When a fireman goes through raging flames to rescue someone, he is still afraid, but overcomes this fear because someone is depending on him.

For this reason we speak of an intermediate level: although we cannot prevent the feeling of fear, we have the freedom to control our reaction to it, giving us the opportunity to be courageous, or to act appropriately.

ACTION LEVELS OF THE HUMAN PERSON

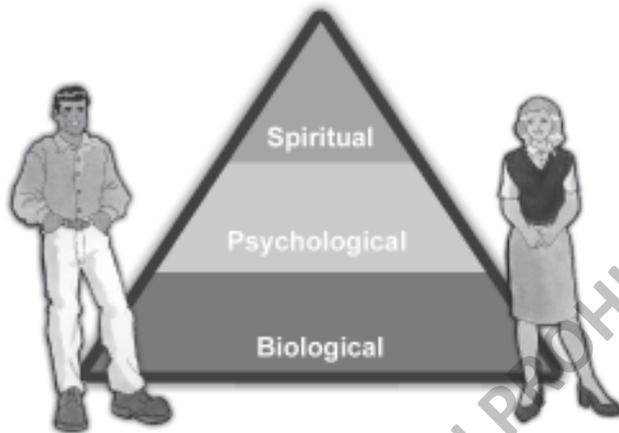


Diagram 2C

When there is sexual intercourse, it may seem that it involves two bodies. But this is actually not true: it involves two human beings.

The relationship between the three levels is represented with a pyramid-shaped graph (or a three part triangle). (Diagram 2.C)

It is best to have "our pyramid" aligned. This way we'll be our own masters; our intelligence and our free will decide what we need to do and the rest of our being (our feelings and our body) will obey and follow.

But sometimes this isn't so easy. We'll decide we need a specific thing, we'll want it, but we can't go for it. Our pyramid will not be a whole. Our feelings won't follow our decision. This is what we call non-integration and it is the origin of hypocrisy, cheating and many other things. This can be expressed more simply: confusion. (Diagram 2.D) It's harder to love this way, because we might constantly follow our whims.

Instead, if we discover what is right, and pursue it, our pyramid will become more and more integrated. We will feel wholesome, unified inside and out, and therefore, at peace. He who finds

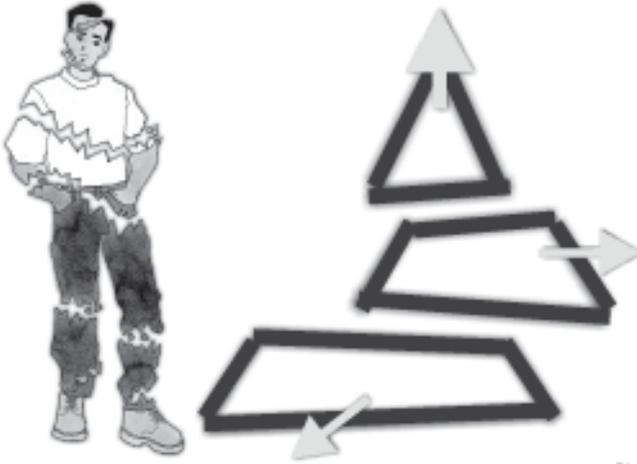


Diagram 2D

what is truly worthwhile and pursues it - though it may be difficult- will begin to discover the path toward happiness.

That is the true path to happiness: Knowing that I am useful and being able to give.

Knowing that I can give to others from what I discover to be right, and thus fill my giving with meaning. Nowadays research in psychology has demonstrated that meaningfulness is what a person needs the most in order to find happiness.

In this way life itself can be understood to be a gift, but it is also a task, something to be fulfilled.

Growing defines our mission as people, because from the time of conception everything is present in us but it is present like a ball of yarn. Nature makes our bodies grow and thus is the first to unroll our yarn. But we must also unroll our inner yarn.

That means that we must perfect our qualities, learn things and mature on the psychological as well as the spiritual level.

It isn't the same to see life through the eyes of a small child as it is to see it through a teenager's eyes, such as yours.

Our intelligence always learns new things and we gradually learn to love in a more mature way. Our feelings also change: at

certain stages girls don't like boys and vice versa. But later, they do everything in their power to attract the attention of the opposite sex and try to be with them.

But adolescence itself includes changes-. At first boys "like girls" and the same goes for the girls. Then they don't like just any "girl," instead they like "certain" girls. We go from having crushes to looking for a person who's a bit more special. This process, if it continues normally, will lead us to the necessary maturity and balance to know what to expect from a husband or wife. Whether we find our couple immediately or whether it takes a long time, we'll be mature enough to assume responsibilities.

We go from being small children that "don't know much," to mature and responsible adults (and this doesn't mean that being a "know it all" child is bad or that everyone who grows in age and height is a mature adult).

Studies tell us that a person reaches maturity when they are "physically healthy, emotionally stable, socially responsible and open to values of our spiritual level." It is thus that your life is understood to be a gift, as well as hard work, a mission. (Diagram 2.E)

This is why it's important to know that some things can be done and others just can't and not because someone forbids them, but because we need to follow a certain discipline to grow and achieve happiness. A person that doesn't have the clarity to see the values that nourish freedom and love will rarely find the path to happiness.

The great challenges that life has in store for us can only be overcome with a mature attitude. A mature attitude will allow us to understand and to be able to do things that may seem like heroic actions, such as not going to a party in order to take care of a sick family member or helping to bathe a sick person, no matter how unpleasant this may be, or spending an entire night helping a brother with a school project. These are all

A person that doesn't have the clarity to see the values that nourish freedom and love will rarely find the path to happiness.



Diagram 2E

small tasks that speak of great personal efforts that no one can make us do unless we are convinced we want to do them.

This is the key to authentic love: to give more than a feeling, to give ourselves for the sake of others even if we have to sacrifice something.

This is why it's important for us to learn how to organize our scale of values. This is the only way to understand this.

But mind you, there are no losses in true love; everything is like an investment (like savings). Once you give of yourself "giving up yourself" you discover an inner peace and well-being. You will feel useful and meaningful and then everything you do for the other person will be worth the effort. As such, deep inside, you won't really be giving anything up; instead you will get what is best for you.

The following story confirms what I've been saying: it's about a young 33-year-old man who gave up everything, even his own health, to go live on an island populated only by lepers. It's the story of Father Damian de Veuster, a Catholic priest from Belgium, who lived on the Hawaiian island of Molokai until

his death. For fifteen years he lived with the lepers, helped them improve their living conditions, cared for them, inspired them and shared their suffering. He never lost hope and when he was transferred he asked to be left with the people with whom he had shared his life. He died of leprosy. The inhabitants learned how to live with dignity, accepting their illness and learning to value and even enjoy their lives.

For many the death of Father Damian might have been considered a failure. But actually his work survived his own death and today he is an example of heroic giving, which is capable of accomplishing great changes.

Being able to perform heroic actions requires a lot of maturity in order to share and give yourself.

Chapter 3 **Life as a Stable, Permanent and Happy Couple**

The "Blue Book" drew his attention ... and Betty's too. It was a different way of dealing with a subject that interested her and many of her friends. She wanted to know more of life itself. Soon she would graduate from high school and she was filled with doubts regarding her future, her career choices, dating, marriage and sexuality. Some people said that a sexual relationship was "the best." Others thought that it was best to wait, all this without even mentioning what was seen on the street or on TV! Some of her friends saw marriage as just papers and hypocrisy, and because of this they saw no reason to wait.

She was confused: on the one hand she dreamed of her "Prince Charming" who would make her happy. But she knew this wasn't real, that broken marriages, quarrellings and divorces were the most common things. Besides, she always saw herself as a successful professional who would be "too busy" to care for a family. Anyway, it seemed as though people who didn't give "so much of themselves" (in things like getting married and having a family) were happier: they went out with whomever they wanted to, whenever they wanted and however they wanted, without having children, husbands and these kinds of things to worry about. However, she always came back to her wish for something different. In a way, Betty wanted something real and most especially to live happily ever after, not for just a while.

Reading some of John's father's notes made her think and one of her life's desires was revived. Her thoughts were more or less the following: "I'm about to finish high school. Then comes college (that's if I get accepted). More freedom. I'll be an adult. Along with this will come other challenges. What is the best for me? Is it a good idea to believe in marriage? What for? How is it different from dating? And if I get married, what will I do with my life? Will I still be able to work? What will I do every day? I want to answer these questions for myself. No one else is going to live my life for me. This is why I want clear and specific information. If necessary, I'll do my own research."

The Blue Book seemed like a good starting point. There were some things that she might be able to research along with John, but there were others that were definitely her problem and meant taking charge of her life. It was a gratifying thing to do.

"Hey John, you're going to have to lend me your Blue Book more often. Your father wrote pretty well and I'm interested in what he had to say."

"You liked it, huh? You're right, my dad did write well." His eyes filled with tears and he tried to fight the feeling. "I miss him so much, Bet!"

Betty felt awkward and didn't know what to say. She just took his hand and offered a shoulder to cry on. He stayed there for a moment, but then suddenly he raised his head, dried his tears and went back to being a "real man." His friend looked at him with compassion and thought that sometimes men were pretty foolish in trying to hide their natural feelings, such as the pain from losing a father. She didn't like public displays, but she thought it wasn't a demonstration of weakness to shed a few tears. Strength isn't contrary to being natural. Some day she would teach this to her children. Even the strongest people cry, when pain is too much ... and that doesn't make them less strong. They must never give up.

"Don't give up, John. He left you this book and many other things ..."

She stayed quiet for a minute, to let emotions cool down.

"Okay, I think we should read together now, I think that might help."

It was an escape valve. That afternoon they went to Betty's house. They enjoyed sitting in the family room. Betty's Mom made them a snack and then went to do the laundry

Life as a Stable, Permanent and Happy Couple

When I think about stability, permanency and happiness with another person I can't help but to think of Helen. She is my partner in life, with her I have shared both good and bad times. For many it's ridiculous to think that a relationship can last forever, but this isn't true and it can be accomplished if both people make the effort.

Every day we see couples around us that seem to like variety and enjoy changes and more changes. They grow tired of "one" and turn to "another." More or less the same thing happens in marriage. It seems that people begin to fight and end up taking their own paths. But in all of them I've noticed one common denominator: they don't get to be happy.

For many it's ridiculous to think that a relationship can last forever, but this isn't true and it can be accomplished if both people make the effort.

Many change or fight because they aren't happy, because they haven't found the happiness they were looking for in marriage. Let me be honest. During my life I've seen a lot of people devote themselves to superficial things, so much so that others thought that their disorganized lifestyles were pretty cool. But I've also seen them "fall."

That is, recognize at some point that everything is a fantasy, everything is just a façade, empty on the inside, filled with sadness and dissatisfaction.

They were people who were used to lying to others and to themselves, but their constant pretenses somehow turned them into real icons. But icons that aren't really happy aren't real icons. They're like a house on a movie set, they are just a façade, the outside, but there's nothing inside: it doesn't have any rooms, a kitchen, or anything else.

It took me a while to discover the truth behind their unhappiness. Then the following question occurred to me: 'Why is it that people who live like this can't achieve real happiness?'

On the other hand, as a real contrast, there was my parents.