

Marriage: a Vocation or a Situation?



In this session...

- Introduction to the course
- The “good news” about marriage
- Uncovering our “marriage-tudes”
- Vocation versus situation
- Love is a proactive verb
- Different paradigms for marriage
- Proximate preparation - developing life skills in the family

1 Student Exercise

I think marriage is...

Check off the word or phrase that most describes *your* current attitude about marriage.

- ☐ Sacred
- ☐ Risky
- ☐ A lot of hard work
- ☐ Just a piece of paper
- ☐ A situation
- ☐ A mission
- ☐ Fun
- ☐ Out of style
- ☐ Mysterious
- ☐ About having babies
- ☐ Responsibilities
- ☐ A life long commitment
- ☐ The most wonderful thing.

Write...

In the workspace below, please answer the following question.

Do you think that you might want to get married some day? Why or why not?

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What do I most want to gain from this class?

Amplify your response in any way that will make it more specific or meaningful to you.

- ☐ Hope for my future marriage
- ☐ Insight into how to have a good relationship
- ☐ Ideas to help prevent divorce
- ☐ An understanding of why it is important to be married in the church
- ☐ Help deciding if I should marry
- ☐ Ways to help my parents and married siblings
- ☐ Something else:

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Introduction

Vocation or Situation?

“Love between man and woman where body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparant irresistible promise of happiness.”

Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est

You all know that in our culture today, if a couple actually wants to get married, the best that is likely to happen is that their relatives and well meaning friends will gather around and basically say, “Hope it works out.” as if it were some mystery that is out of our control. While it is certainly our fondest heart’s desire, there is not much ambition for us to really live in love. The bar is set very low. As if to say, “Don’t fight too much and just don’t get divorced. It is like aiming to barely pass in school. If you miss by a little, you fail.

The Church has a different model for marriage that makes more sense. Instead of just a situation, we call it a “vocation” or a life’s work, just like a career or an important mission that we proactively pursue.

The job description is really simple if you think about it. It boils down to convincing this man (or woman) that I have freely chosen that he (or she) is loved and lovable. If we throw all our talents and energy into that mission and approach it with a pro-active mindset, we are sure to be successful.



Relating to
the Topic

I think love is...

A feeling, an instinct, a choice,
something else?

**Where do I most
want to do my best?**

Sport, music, school, work, other?

**How do I feel when
others are willing
to rely on me for
something important?**

**How would I feel if
God sent me to love
someone for him?**

**Who in my family
or among my close
friends would I
consider trying to love
more intentionally?**

It isn't rocket science. We can learn what makes the other feel loved and "in love." We can look at what draws us closer and what is going on when things are great between us, and we can intentionally put more of that in. Like any important job we do, we expect to have to clear away obstacles and utilize all our resources to achieve our goal.

The secular idea that marriage is a 50/50 proposition does not work, because it leads us to hold back and to keep score. The Church in it's wisdom asks us to love whole heartedly and to give ourselves as a total gift to the other. We choose to give ourselves freely not just on our wedding day but every day in each proactive and unilateral choice we make to love. It is not dependent on how the other is behaving. We keep our focus on loving the other and doing our job. Our potential to live in love is in our will. We choose it, and we are freer than we think we are to live in love.

A vocation is a life's choice to which God calls us. He is therefore always eager to send his grace to help us to get the job done. So, in marriage, we can pray for passion, enthusiasm, or perhaps an affirming spirit and we are assured of God's help.



Love is in the Will



“Man and woman are free with the freedom of the gift. In fact ...become a gift, each for the other,through their whole humanity made of femininity and masculinity....

Here we mean freedom above all as self-mastery.

Under this aspect, self-mastery is indispensable in order for man to be able to “give himself” in order to become a gift ,..to be able to “find himself fully through a sincere gift of self.”

Gaudium Spes. 24:3

“Christ sets us free...and linked freedom with the commandment to love.”

John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them, A Theology of the Body*
p 339

“According to the author of Ephesians, the conjugal relationship which unites a husband and a wife should help us to understand the love which unites Christ and the Church.”

John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them, A Theology of the Body*
p 312

Different Models for Marriage

Couples who marry in the Church have a distinctly different operating vision of what marriage should be. The goal for secular marriage is typically mutual self fulfillment, in other words, we want to get our needs met and be happy; whereas, marriage between people of faith invites God into the relationship and raises the bar for ambition. People of faith also have access to powerful resources for loving not typically offered by the culture. After all, God is Love, and He can inspire, motivate, and help us to love.

The Catholic community fosters values that are decidedly helpful in nurturing marriage, values like: forgiveness, compassion, humility, intimacy, permanent belonging, self-sacrifice, respect, unconditional acceptance and unselfish generosity.

A couple adrift in the secular culture is immersed in values such as privacy, independence, consumerism, frantic activity, obsession with accomplishment, and even pride, all of which lead us away from relationship and can be toxic for marriage.

We are all living such fast paced and hectic lives that we often do not stop to think about it. It is only



common sense that a couple who spends time each week exposed to values that turn them towards each other will do better than a couple who is constantly distracted from their relationship. Not even a plant can grow unless we pay attention and water it.

MOREOVER, the church holds out a vision of passionate, other-centered, self donation that can inspire a couple to "raise the bar" of their ambitions for the sake of their family and community.

The special role of couples in the Church inspires them to be more generous, because others are counting on them. You see, Catholics believe that a married couple in love shows us how Jesus loves us by the way they love each other. Because they do, God is really alive and present in their love. That love overflows and touches everyone. Married love is so special to the Church. That is the joy of the sacrament!



Student Exercise

1

Getting to know you

1. Answer each question in the left hand column
2. When you are finished, interview the person to your right asking them any three questions of your choice. You may ask them for the answers to the same questions you both just answered or come up with your own. Be respectful and polite!
3. Tell the group one thing that you learned about the person that you interviewed.

Question 1:

Question 2:

Question 3:

Name:

Email:

Favorite snack:

Favorite sport to play:

Favorite sport to watch:

The kind of music I most like to listen to:

Favourite band/entertainer:

Favourite TV show:

Favourite Movie:

**When I am hanging out with my friends
we usually...**

If I could be anywhere, it would be...

I am most interested in...

What I am most curious about marriage is...



Making it Real - Life Skill Challenge:

"Love is a Verb"

Each week, we will assign an activity to help reinforce what we talked about and give you a chance to practice a basic relationship skill.

These are skills that will be helpful to you your whole life long.

The challenge for each of us is to try them on and use them.

Sometime this week, proactively decide to do or say something that will make at least one of your family members feel loved or lovable.

Report back the results to the class next week.

Extra Notes