



Beloved™

Finding Happiness in Marriage


LEADER'S GUIDE

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

The Mystery and Meaning
of Marriage

Edward Sri
Lucas Pollice
General Editors

SAMPLE



Nihil obstat: Derek Barr, Censor Deputatus
Imprimatur: Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L., Archbishop of Denver
January 2015

Copyright © 2015 Augustine Institute. All rights reserved.

With the exception of short excerpts used in articles and critical reviews, no part of this work may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in any form whatsoever, printed or electronic, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Some Scripture verses contained herein are from the Catholic Edition of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright ©1965, 1966 by the Division of Christian Educators of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the United States of America, copyright ©1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: Modification from the Editio Typica copyright ©1997, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Writers: Lucas Pollice, Randy Southern, Edward Sri
Media: Steve Flanigan, Jon Ervin, Justin Leddick, Kevin Mallory, Ted Mast, John Schmidt
Print Production/Graphic Design: Justin Deister, Ann Diaz, Brenda Kraft, Jane Myers, Devin Schadt

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our Sunday Visitor

Production of this project was made possible with the generous support of the *Our Sunday Visitor Institute*.

Augustine Institute
6160 South Syracuse Way, Suite 310
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
Information: 303-937-4420
AugustineInstitute.org
SymbolonCatholic.org

Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 978-0-9862288-3-4

SESSION 1

DOES MARRIAGE MATTER?

*Marriage
Preparation*

The Mystery and Meaning of Marriage

Beloved™

SESSION 1

DOES MARRIAGE MATTER?

SESSION OVERVIEW

Long before governments and societies ever discussed marriage, God put on the human heart a longing for the unique lifelong commitment and total self-giving love found in the Sacrament of Matrimony. We're going to see how marriage corresponds to this human desire for a lasting love, and how it's also good for our happiness and good for a flourishing society.

But even more than that, we're going to see that underneath this ancient institution known as marriage, there's something much deeper at work. Marriage is bound up with God's plan for the entire world. In our marriages we participate in something much greater than our human affection for each other or the wonderful desire to be with the one we love. We are caught up into something so much bigger than our own human love. We are caught up into God's love.

STEP 1 OPENING PRAYER

SAY: Welcome to "The Mystery and Meaning of Marriage"! We're glad you're here. Before we get started, let's pray.

Encourage couples to pray the following prayer together in their Guides (page 10).

Heavenly Father,

Through the intercession of the Holy Family, help us treasure the gift of marriage that reflects the love of Christ for the Church, where the self-giving love of husband and wife unites them more perfectly and cooperates in your plan for new life created in your image.

Help us support men and women in their vocation of marriage, especially in difficult times when they join their sufferings to the Cross.
Help us uphold the institution of marriage in our society as the place where love is nurtured and family life begins.
Help us acknowledge that our future depends on this love and your providential care for us. Amen.



STEP 2 INTRODUCTION

In this first session, take a few minutes to get to know your couples and get them comfortable with answering questions in the group setting.

Use any or all of the following questions:

- **How did you and your beloved meet? Was it love at first sight for you, or did it take more than one look?**
- **What attracted you most about your beloved?**
- **What are you most looking forward to in marriage?**

SAY: This session marks the beginning of a journey—one that will strengthen your bond with your future spouse and give you a fresh perspective on your relationship. Before we start that journey, though, I want to give you an idea of where we’re heading.

In this session, we’ll talk about what marriage is and whether marriage really matters.

In Session 2, we’ll discuss God’s plan for marriage and how we participate in that plan.

Session 3 deals with how God reveals what love really is and how we are to exhibit that kind of love in our marriages.

Session 4 looks at how love entails a total gift of self, in the daily relationship issues that come up in most marriages and in sexual intimacy.

In Session 5, we’ll look at how a sacramental marriage forges a new kind of relationship between man and woman—how God becomes present to the couple in a new way and how a font of grace is available to help couples face whatever challenges may come and to love each other as Christ loves us.

And in Session 6, we’ll wrap things up by considering the real challenges even the best of marriages face and how those challenges are opportunities for the couple to grow.

STEP 3 VIDEO

SAY: Let’s get started with a video segment that takes us all the way back to the origin of marriage.

Play the video for Episode 1, which will last for approximately 25 minutes. Look for reactions during the video to get a sense of how people are connecting with the material.

Here’s an outline of the video segment:

- I. The human heart desires the unique, special kind of love found in marriage.
 - A. The heart desires a love that is faithful.
 - B. The heart desires a love that is permanent
 - C. The heart desires a love that is exclusive.
 - D. The heart desires the love that is found in God’s plan for marriage.

- II. The love that is found in God's plan for marriage tends to lead to happier lives.
- A. Studies show that married people enjoy greater happiness, psychological well-being and sexual satisfaction than their single, divorced, or widowed counterparts.
 - B. Studies show that married people have higher incomes and are less prone to violence.
 - C. Studies show that married men and women have longer lifespans.
- III. Our marriages are bound up with God's plan for the whole world.
- A. When someone asked Jesus what the law said about marriage, he went beyond the question of law and brought them back to God's plan for marriage in the book of Genesis.
 - B. In Genesis 1, the first creation story ends with God making us male and female.
 - C. In Genesis 2, the second creation story ends with God bringing the man and woman together to become one in marriage.
 - D. God's goal for the world has something to do with marriage.
 - E. The love between husband and wife in marriage is a participation in God's love for us and a unique sign of that divine love in the world.
 - F. This is why our marriages matter so much and why we want to do all we can to understand what marriage really is and how we can live according to God's plan for it.

"Marriage based on exclusive and definitive love becomes the icon of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa."

—Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 11, 2005

STEP 4 SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

SAY: Now let's take some time in small groups to discuss what we learned in the video and how we can apply this to our daily lives.

Ask your couples to arrange themselves in small groups of 4–6 people. Keep an eye on the clock here; make sure you leave plenty of time for couples to discuss the more intimate questions of Step 5.

Read the following questions aloud one at a time, giving the small groups time to answer each one. When you notice the discussion of one question starting to die down, move on to the next one.

If you feel comfortable interacting with the small groups while they work, you might inject one or more of the responses that follow each question into the discussion.

1. If we are hardwired to desire the faithful, permanent, and exclusive love of marriage, why do you think marriage can be so difficult sometimes? How do you think our culture affects the way we view marriage?

- *Each of us brings certain preconceived notions into a marriage. When they don't pan out, we're forced to reconsider what we thought we knew. That can lead to frustration and disillusionment.*
- *We live in a culture that devalues faithfulness, permanence, and exclusivity—a culture whose negative view of marriage can rub off on us if we're not careful.*
- *Marriage can be hard sometimes, and it requires daily work, self-sacrifice, and forgiveness. God intended marriage to be work—the most rewarding kind of work, but work nonetheless.*

2. Imagine that you're having lunch with a single friend who claims that marriage is overrated and then asks why you are bothering even getting married. What would you say in response?

Encourage group members to talk about the personal experiences they would share if they were trying to help a friend understand the value of marriage and why they are choosing to get married.

The studies cited in the video clip found that married people generally...

- are happier,
- are less depressed,
- enjoy more frequent and better quality sexual experiences,
- earn more money,
- are less prone to violence, and
- live longer than their single, divorced, or widowed counterparts.

This, of course, doesn't mean every marriage will be happier, healthier, and wealthier. But it does suggest that marriage does correspond to our human needs—it tends to be good for people's lives and society.

If time permits, quickly go through the questions one at a time again and ask representatives from different small groups to share one or two of the responses they came up with. Give your group a chance to hear how other couples tackled the questions.

"Today, there are those who say that marriage is out of fashion... They say that it is not worth making a lifelong commitment, making a definitive decision, 'forever,' because we do not know what tomorrow will bring. I ask you, instead, to be revolutionaries, I ask you to swim against the tide; yes, I am asking you to rebel against this culture that sees everything as temporary and that ultimately believes you are incapable of responsibility, that believes you are incapable of true love."
—Pope Francis, World Youth Day on July 28, 2013



STEP 5 COUPLE'S DISCUSSION

SAY: Now let's take some time for you as individual couples to discuss your own relationship and some of the expectations each of you have about marriage.

Give your couples a chance to spread out around your meeting area. Each couple should be far enough away from everyone else to be able to talk privately. They'll find these questions in their Couple's Guides.

Help couples budget their time effectively and offer guidance and examples as suggested below, in whatever manner you see fit.

1. What are some of the hopes and expectations that each of you is bringing into your marriage?

Encourage couples to have an open and honest discussion about their hopes and dreams for their marriage. It is very important that each one knows the hopes and expectations of his/her beloved so that they know each other's heart and dreams for marriage, and to also be sure that there are no unrealistic expectations that could enter into the marriage.

Halfway through your time allotted for this step, read Question 2 aloud.

2. What are some of the challenges and difficulties that you foresee in marriage?

If you sense that certain couples are struggling with this question, encourage them to think of some of the difficulties that they might already encounter in their relationship in areas such as:

- *Communication, especially emotions or desires*
- *Conflict, and the different ways in which each of them views and handles conflict*
- *Money and finances, especially after they begin sharing one bank account, etc.*

You might encourage them to imagine having children and some of the challenges and difficulties that may bring into their marriage.

*"Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife,
and they become one flesh."*

—Genesis 2:24

STEP 6 WRAP-UP AND CLOSING PRAYER

SAY: We saw in the video how marriages are caught up into God's plan for the entire world and how in the Sacrament of Matrimony our human love participates in God's very love for us. This will be explored more in the next several sessions. But for now, let's step back and ponder, "What is God's plan for marriage?" Some key aspects of this plan can be found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1601–1605 or if you don't have a *Catechism*, you can find the website for the online *Catechism* on page 12 of your Couple's Guide:

www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/

Direct couples to the "Couple's Activity" section in their Guides.

This week I want you to spend some time together reading these paragraphs from the *Catechism* and then asking yourselves, "How does this understanding of God's plan for marriage change the way I/we envision our future marriage? Do I/we find these truths challenging, or comforting, or both as we prepare for marriage?"

SAY: Let's close our session with prayer.

Almighty God,

We aspire to the ideal of marriage that you established long before any other cultural or governmental statutes existed. Your Holy Scriptures say, "From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female'; 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one'; So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

Bless our efforts to protect and nourish the union you have ordained.

Amen.

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.



Beloved™

Finding Happiness in Marriage


LEADER'S GUIDE

MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

The Mystery and Meaning
of Marriage

Edward Sri
Lucas Pollice
General Editors

SAMPLE



Nihil obstat: Derek Barr, Censor Deputatus
Imprimatur: Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L., Archbishop of Denver
January 2015

Copyright © 2015 Augustine Institute. All rights reserved.

With the exception of short excerpts used in articles and critical reviews, no part of this work may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in any form whatsoever, printed or electronic, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Some Scripture verses contained herein are from the Catholic Edition of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright ©1965, 1966 by the Division of Christian Educators of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the United States of America, copyright ©1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: Modification from the Editio Typica copyright ©1997, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Writers: Lucas Pollice, Randy Southern, Edward Sri

Media: Steve Flanigan, Jon Ervin, Justin Leddick, Kevin Mallory, Ted Mast, John Schmidt

Print Production/Graphic Design: Justin Deister, Ann Diaz, Brenda Kraft, Jane Myers, Devin Schadt

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our Sunday Visitor

Production of this project was made possible with the generous support of the *Our Sunday Visitor Institute*.

Augustine Institute
6160 South Syracuse Way, Suite 310
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
Information: 303-937-4420
AugustineInstitute.org
SymbolonCatholic.org

Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 978-0-9862288-3-4

SESSION 1

DOES MARRIAGE MATTER?



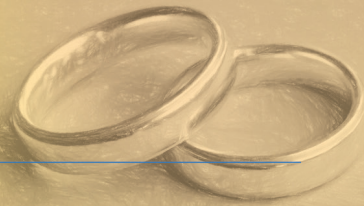
*Marriage
Enrichment*

The Mystery and Meaning of Marriage

Beloved™

SESSION 1

DOES MARRIAGE MATTER?



SESSION OVERVIEW

Long before governments and societies ever discussed marriage, God put on the human heart a longing for the unique lifelong commitment and total self-giving love found in the Sacrament of Matrimony. We're going to see how marriage corresponds to this human desire for a lasting love, and how it's also good for our happiness and good for a flourishing society.

But even more than that, we're going to see that underneath this ancient institution known as marriage, there's something much deeper at work. Marriage is bound up with God's plan for the entire world. In our marriages we participate in something much greater than our human affection for each other or the wonderful desire to be with the one we love. We are caught up into something so much bigger than our own human love. We are caught up into God's love.

STEP 1 OPENING PRAYER

SAY: Welcome to "The Mystery and Meaning of Marriage"! We're glad you're here. Before we get started, let's pray.

Encourage participants to the Opening Prayer in their Couple's Guides (page 10).

Heavenly Father,

Through the intercession of the Holy Family, help us treasure the gift of marriage that reflects the love of Christ for the Church, where the self-giving love of husband and wife unites them more perfectly and cooperates in your plan for new life created in your image.

Help us support men and women
in their vocation of marriage,
especially in difficult times when they join
their sufferings to the Cross.
Help us uphold the institution of marriage
in our society as the place where love
is nurtured and family life begins.
Help us acknowledge that our future depends
on this love and your providential care for us.

Amen.



STEP 2 INTRODUCTION

Take a few minutes to get to know your couples and get them comfortable with answering questions in the group setting.

Use any or all of the following questions:

- **How long have you been married?**
- **How did you meet? Was it love at first sight for you, or did it take more than one look?**
- **Name one thing you appreciate about your spouse more now than you did when you got married.**

SAY: This session marks the beginning of a journey—one that will strengthen your bond with your spouse and give you a fresh perspective on your relationship. Before we start that journey, though, I want to give you an idea of where we're heading.

In this session, we'll talk about what marriage is and whether marriage really matters.

In Session 2, we'll discuss God's plan for marriage and how we participate in that plan.

Session 3 deals with how God reveals what love *really* is and how we are to exhibit that kind of love in our marriages.

Session 4 looks at how love entails a total gift of self, in the daily relationship issues that come up in most marriages and in sexual intimacy.

In Session 5, we'll look at how a sacramental marriage forges a new kind of relationship between man and woman—how God becomes present to the couple in a new way and how a font of grace is available to help couples face whatever challenges may come and to love each other as Christ loves us.

And in Session 6, we'll wrap things up by considering the real challenges even the best of marriages face and how those challenges are opportunities for the couple to grow.

STEP 3 VIDEO

SAY: Let's get started with a video segment that takes us all the way back to the origin of marriage.

Play the video for Episode 1, which will last for approximately 29 minutes. Look for reactions during the video to get a sense of how people are connecting with the material.

Here's an outline of the video segment:

- I. The human heart desires the unique, special kind of love found in marriage.
 - A. The heart desires a love that is faithful.
 - B. The heart desires a love that is permanent
 - C. The heart desires a love that is exclusive.
 - D. The heart desires the love that is found in God's plan for marriage.

- II. The love that is found in God's plan for marriage tends to lead to happier lives.
- A. Studies show that married people enjoy greater happiness, psychological well-being and sexual satisfaction than their single, divorced, or widowed counterparts.
 - B. Studies show that married people have higher incomes and are less prone to violence.
 - C. Studies show that married men and women have longer lifespans.
- III. Our marriages are bound up with God's plan for the whole world.
- A. When someone asked Jesus what the law said about marriage, he went beyond the question of law and brought them back to God's plan for marriage in the book of Genesis.
 - B. In Genesis 1, the first creation story ends with God making us male and female.
 - C. In Genesis 2, the second creation story ends with God bringing the man and woman together to become one in marriage.
 - D. God's goal for the world has something to do with marriage.
 - E. The love between husband and wife in marriage is a participation in God's love for us and a unique sign of that divine love in the world.
 - F. This is why our marriages matter so much and why we want to do all we can to understand what marriage really is and how we can live according to God's plan for it.

"Marriage based on exclusive and definitive love becomes the icon of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa."

—Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 11, 2005

STEP 4 SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

SAY: Now let's take some time in small groups to discuss what we learned in the video and how we can apply this to our daily lives.

Ask your couples to arrange themselves in small groups of 4–6 people. Keep an eye on the clock here; make sure you leave plenty of time for couples to discuss the more intimate questions of Step 5.

Read the following questions aloud one at a time, giving the small groups time to answer each one. When you notice the discussion of one question starting to die down, move on to the next one.

If you feel comfortable interacting with the small groups while they work, you might inject one or more of the responses that follow each question into the discussion.

1. If we are hardwired to desire the faithful, permanent, and exclusive love of marriage, why is marriage so difficult sometimes?

- Each of us brings certain preconceived notions into a marriage. When they don't pan out, we're forced to reconsider what we thought we knew. That can lead to frustration and disillusionment.
- We live in a culture that devalues faithfulness, permanence, and exclusivity—a culture whose negative view of marriage can rub off on us if we're not careful.
- God intended marriage to be work—the most rewarding kind of work, but work nonetheless.

2. Imagine that you're having lunch with a single friend who claims that marriage is overrated and then challenges you to prove otherwise. What would you say in response?

The studies cited in the video clip found that married people generally...

- are happier,
- are less depressed,
- enjoy more frequent and better quality sexual experiences,
- earn more money,
- are less prone to violence, and
- live longer than their single, divorced, or widowed counterparts.

This, of course, doesn't mean every marriage will be happier, healthier, and wealthier. But it does suggest that marriage does correspond to our human needs—it tends to be good for people's lives and for society.

Encourage group members to talk about the personal experiences they would share if they were trying to help a friend understand the value of marriage.

If time permits, quickly go through the questions one at a time again and ask representatives from different small groups to share one or two of the responses they came up with. Give your group a chance to hear how other couples tackled the questions.

*"Today, there are those who say that marriage is out of fashion... They say that it is not worth making a lifelong commitment, making a definitive decision, 'forever,' because we do not know what tomorrow will bring. I ask you, instead, to be revolutionaries, I ask you to swim against the tide; yes, I am asking you to rebel against this culture that sees everything as temporary and that ultimately believes you are incapable of responsibility, that believes you are incapable of true love."
—Pope Francis, World Youth Day on July 28, 2013*



STEP 5 COUPLE'S DISCUSSION

SAY: Now let's take some time for you as individual couples to discuss your own married relationship and some of the ways each of you viewed marriage when you got married.

Give your couples a chance to spread out around your meeting area. Each couple should be far enough away from everyone else to be able to talk privately. They'll find these questions in their Couple's Guides.

Help couples budget their time effectively and offer guidance and examples as suggested below, in whatever manner you see fit.

1. What preconceived notions—perhaps unrealistic hopes and expectations—about marriage did each of you have before you got married?

If you sense that couples are having a hard time remembering their preconceived notions, you might call out some of the following suggestions to see if they ring any bells:

- *Some may have had a highly romanticized view of marriage, like romances they've seen in the movies or heard about in love songs.*
- *Some may have expected their personal fears and dysfunction to go away when they got married.*
- *Some may have expected their marriage to be free of petty annoyances and ridiculous arguments.*
- *Some may have expected their spouse to share their excitement about and willingness to work at marriage.*
- *Some may have expected their own marriage roles and interactions to resemble those of their parents.*
- *Some may have expected sexual intimacy to come naturally, without any trial and error—two people coming together easily as one.*

Halfway through your time allotted for this step, read Question 2 aloud.

2. What challenges or problems did your unrealistic expectations about marriage create?

If you sense that certain couples are struggling with this question, share some of the following responses to spur their thinking:

- *Misconceptions about what a marriage should be might have prompted some unreasonable demands.*
- *Concerns about living up to someone else's marriage legacy might rob a relationship of its uniqueness.*
- *Preconceived notions about how "easy" marriage should be might lead to questions about having married the wrong person.*
- *Unrealistic expectations regarding sex might have led to disappointment and frustration.*

*"Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife,
and they become one flesh."*

—Genesis 2:24

STEP 6 WRAP-UP AND CLOSING PRAYER

SAY: We saw in the video how our marriages are caught up into God's plan for the entire world and how in the Sacrament of Matrimony our human love participates in God's very love for us. This will be explored more in the next several sessions. But for now, let's step back and ponder, "What is God's plan for marriage?" Some key aspects of this plan can be found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1601–1605 or if you don't have a *Catechism*, you can find the website for the online *Catechism* on page 12 of your Couple's Guide:

www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/

Direct couples to the "Couple's Activity" section of their Guides.

SAY: This week I want you to spend some time together reading these paragraphs from the *Catechism* and then asking yourselves, "What does this mean for us and our marriage?" Talk about how certain truths can be applied to your relationship, or perhaps give you comfort or a renewed sense of gratitude for your marriage.

SAY: Let's close our session with prayer.

Almighty God,

We aspire to the ideal of marriage that you established long before any other cultural or governmental statutes existed. Your Holy Scriptures say, "From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female'; 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one'; So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

Bless our efforts to protect and nourish the union you have ordained.

Amen.

Notes

[illegible]