



A NEW MARRIAGE PREPARATION "SUPPLEMENT"

Theology of the Body

BASED ON THE

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY



GOD'S PLAN FOR
A JOY-FILLED

Marriage



God's Plan For a Joy-Filled Marriage is a marriage preparation supplement that offers engaged couples a more compelling presentation of God's glorious plan for marital love than perhaps any program available in the Church today.

Based on Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body, this supplement need not replace current diocesan or parish programs. Rather, it is intended to enhance a key component of marriage preparation: catechesis in the theology of marriage and the gift of human sexuality.

God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage can be implemented as a one-day seminar or over multiple evenings.



“The program was wonderful. I plan to return to the Church because of it and I’m so excited. Thank you so much, this program has truly touched my life.”

—Stephanie S.

A COMPELLING VISION THAT SPEAKS TO THE HEARTS OF TODAY'S COUPLES

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When people think of the Catholic Church’s teaching on sex and marriage, they often think of a list of “prohibitions.” Others who live the Church’s teachings often do so with an “I’m-coping-with-it, but-I’m-not-happy” attitude. *God’s Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage* offers a refreshing, liberating vision of marriage and sexuality—one that helps couples fully embrace, and even celebrate, God’s glorious plan for their lives.

God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage provides couples with a rich understanding of the teachings of the Church and offers them the tools to live married life as God intended. The creators of the program believe that when engaged couples understand God’s plan for marriage, including a clear and pastoral explanation of the “difficult teachings,” they come away from the program with a sense of liberation and gratitude rather than resentment toward the Church.



“My fiancée and I have grown and deepened our love and commitment to Christ more from this program than in our whole relationship.”
—Steve S.

“This was the best presentation of Catholic teaching I have ever heard.”
—Melanie F.

“If my fiancée and I had learned these teachings of the Church on sexuality sooner, we would never have become sexually active.”
—Mark M

“This class has renewed my faith in the Catholic Church.”
—Jennifer W.

“As an Evangelical Christian, I was blown away...I am now considering taking RCIA.”
—Lisa R.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage is divided into two main parts, each with three engaging presentations and two reflection exercises for couples.

Part 1 – Catholic Faith & Your Marriage

It is the common experience of those who work with engaged couples that the faith of these couples is most often in need of rediscovery, nourishment, and maturation. Following the basic Christian schema of “Creation, Fall, and Redemption,” Part I provides a reflection on the Word of God as understood by the Church in regard to God’s plan for marriage and our need for Christ. It also helps couples understand the nature and meaning of the commitments they make in their exchange of vows. Part 1 includes three presentations:

- *God's Plan for Marriage "In the Beginning"*
- *Christ Restores God's Plan for Marriage*
- *What Are You Saying "I Do" To?*

Part 2 – Sacramental Sexuality

While many factors have contributed to the breakdown of marriage and family life, special attention must be given to the widespread acceptance of new sexual attitudes and “lifestyles.” There is no sidestepping this often difficult aspect of marriage preparation. John Paul II’s Theology of the Body provides the positive approach we need. Building on the foundation laid in Part 1, Part 2 of *God's Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage* presents the joys of “sexual honesty” before and within marriage. Part 2 includes three presentations:

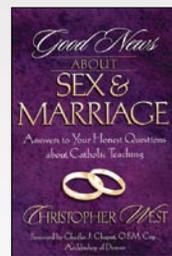
- *The Joy of Sexual Honesty Before Marriage*
- *The Joy of Sexual Honesty Within Marriage*
- *Some Practical Benefits of Natural Family Planning*

PROGRAM MATERIALS

God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage comes with resources for both the couples and instructors/facilitators. For couples, we offer a workbook and a text book:

Workbook:

Each person will receive a *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage* workbook for use throughout the class. The workbook is laid out in an easy-to-use format.*



Textbook:

Each couple will receive a copy of the highly-acclaimed book *Good News About Sex & Marriage: Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching*. The workbook cross references more than 115 topics covered in more detail in this text. It is an invaluable resource that couples will turn to as they discern the issues they face in marriage.

* An instructor's edition of this workbook is also available.

“This program has been exceptionally beneficial and has brought us



TRAINING PROGRAM

The creators of *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage* believe that the key to a successful program is not only its content, but also the people who facilitate or teach the program. We have created turn-key training programs to help you bring one of the most effective marriage preparation programs available in the Catholic Church today to your parish and diocese. For more information about our training program, visit www.JoyFilledMarriage.com

Faith Should Be Proposed, Not Imposed

God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage works from the premise that Catholic teaching can never be *imposed*, only *proposed*, especially in our modern culture where messages that are contrary to the Catholic vision of marital love are commonplace. We realize that we are presenting the Church's vision to a skeptical audience that will ask many valid and understandable questions. We also know that pastoral sensitivity is vital to transmitting the message successfully.

We believe that when Catholic teaching is upheld in its full splendor, it does not need to be foisted on anyone. Men and women are naturally attracted to the beauty of God's plan for marital love; most couples simply have never heard it presented in a sensible, appealing way. *God's Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage* seeks to do just that—present the fullness of Catholic teaching on marital love in all its beauty. The rest is in God's hands.



"This program is the first that I have heard that offered candid and logically sound discussions about Catholic teaching on sex and marriage. I am truly appreciative."

—Tom S.

Life-Changing Results



God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage is based on the highly successful program first developed in the late 1990s by the Marriage and Family Life Office in the Archdiocese of Denver. One of the first steps the Archdiocese took was to implement a survey that addressed "lifestyle" questions—both before and after couples went through the program. The results were extraordinary.

Having surveyed more than two thousand couples over a five-year period, the creators of *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage* found that:

91% were sexually active coming into the program.

48% (of the above 91%) said they will save sex until marriage because of this program. An **additional 20%** said they were now *considering* saving sex for marriage.

31% stated they will "definitely use" natural family planning in their marriages because of this seminar.

45% "may use NFP" in their marriage.

78% came away with a better understanding of the Catholic vision of marriage.

50% came away with a more positive impression of the Catholic Church.

48% planned to be more active in their faith as a result of the program.

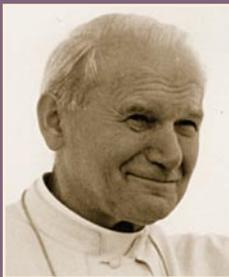
61% made a deeper commitment to Christ as a result of this program.

closer together in love of each other, and in deeper union with the Catholic Church."—Rebecca W.

Strengthen Your Marriage Preparation Program with a New Supplement Based on the Theology of the Body

God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage is a supplemental marriage preparation workshop designed to help today's couples understand and embrace an authentic Catholic vision of married love. It's the first program of its kind to integrate thoroughly the "new language" of Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body in its presentation of Church teaching.

God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage demonstrates the "whys" behind the "whats" of Catholic teaching in a non-threatening and convincing manner. It helps couples understand the beauty of God's plan for marriage and the joy of living it. Originally created for the Archdiocese of Denver, *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage*, recently revised and updated, is now available for use in parishes and dioceses throughout the country.



“I encourage you to continue to place a strong emphasis on marriage as a Christian vocation to which couples are called and to give them the means to live it fully through marriage-preparation programs which are ‘serious in purpose, excellent in content, sufficient in length, and obligatory in nature.’”

—John Paul II



A Supplement, Not a Replacement

God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage is a supplement to existing marriage preparation programs. It is designed to enhance two key components: the theology of marriage and the gift of human sexuality.

Most marriage preparation programs provide couples with only an hour or two of instruction on the theology of marriage and sexuality, *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage* provides couples with a more thorough presentation and explanation of the teachings of the Church. Its “pedagogy,” or approach to teaching, is both rich in content and pastorally sensitive.

The program is divided into two main parts, each with three engaging presentations and two reflection exercises for couples. The program can be taught by an instructor or by using our videos/DVDs. The course can be offered in a single day (with morning and afternoon sessions) or over a series of evenings (from two to six sessions).

God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage
is available in Spanish.

GOD'S PLAN FOR
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Marriage

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Part 1: | Catholic Faith & Your Marriage

It is the common experience of those who work with engaged couples that the faith of these couples is most often in need of rediscovery, nourishment, and maturation. Part I of the workshop is evangelistic in nature. With clear respect for the freedom of each person, it encourages an encounter with the person of Christ through a call to faith in the fundamental truths of Catholicism. Following the basic Christian schema of "Creation, Fall, and Redemption," Part I provides a reflection on the Word of God as understood by the Church in regard to God's plan for marriage and our need for Christ. It also helps couples to understand the nature and meaning of the commitments they make in their exchange of vows. Part 1 includes three presentations:

PRESENTATION 1:

God's Plan for Marriage "In the Beginning"

(Male and Female He Created Them)

Following Christ's words that direct us to reflect on God's plan for marriage "in the beginning" (Mt 19:8), this presentation offers a simple catechesis on marriage as found in Genesis chapters 1-3. It focuses on the image of God in man and woman, the call to love as God loves inscribed in masculinity and femininity, and the impact of the Original Sin on the marital relationship.

PRESENTATION 2:

Christ Restores God's Plan for Marriage

(Male and Female He Redeemed Them)

Beginning with the miracle at the wedding in Cana (Jn 2:1-11), this presentation reflects on the "good news" of Christ's redemption of the marital relationship. It focuses on the power of God's grace to heal the relationship between man and woman, effectively transforming our hearts and empowering us to love "as Christ loves the Church." To the degree that couples enter into this gift of grace, they experience the Church's teaching on marital love not as a list of prudish prohibitions, but as an invitation to embrace the love that truly satisfies.

PRESENTATION 3:

What Are You Saying "I Do" To?

(The Basics of Marriage in the Church)

This presentation was inspired by the testimony of numerous couples who, after experiencing a divorce and obtaining an annulment, lamented that no one had told them what they were supposedly committing themselves to by marrying in the Church. Beginning with a basic definition of marriage gleaned from Canon Law and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, this presentation focuses on the nature of marriage as a sacrament. With the aim of helping couples understand what Catholic marriage is (and isn't), this presentation provides a guided tour of the exchange of consent and concludes by explaining what makes a marriage valid or invalid according to Catholic teaching.



Part 2: | Sacramental Sexuality

While many factors have contributed to the breakdown of marriage and family life, special attention must be given to the widespread acceptance of new sexual attitudes and “lifestyles.” There is no sidestepping this often difficult aspect of marriage preparation. What is needed is a compassionate approach that explains the beauty of the Church’s teaching and, with full respect for people’s freedom, invites couples to embrace it. John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* provides the positive approach we need. Building on the foundation laid in Part 1, Part 2 of *God’s Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage* presents the joys of “sexual honesty” before and within marriage. Part 2 includes three presentations:

PRESENTATION 4 :

The Joy of Sexual Honesty Before Marriage

Beginning with an examination of cultural attitudes and influences regarding sexuality, this presentation is designed to help couples distinguish mature sexual love from its cultural counterfeits. With compassion and sensitivity, it encourages couples to reserve sexual intimacy for that time when it can be an honest renewal and enactment of the marriage covenant. It also encourages couples to re-examine past attitudes and choices that may have negatively influenced their understanding of sexual intimacy. It should be noted that surveys have indicated a very favorable response to this presentation. When the truth is presented with sensitivity and love, couples respond positively.

PRESENTATION 5 :

The Joy of Sexual Honesty Within Marriage

This presentation examines sexual intercourse as a renewal of the wedding vows—spoken not with words, but with the “language of the body.” The goal is to help couples see the Church’s teaching for what it is: a path to authentic freedom and happiness. If couples have followed the logic of the program to this point, they are able to recognize for themselves the wisdom of the Church’s teaching on sexual morality. Special attention is given to the issue of responsible parenthood and the critical difference between contraception and Natural Family Planning. Once again, surveys have indicated a very positive response to this presentation.

PRESENTATION 6

(OPTIONAL — *Depending on the needs of the parish diocese*): Some Practical Benefits of Natural Family Planning

This shorter, closing presentation is designed to introduce couples to some of the many benefits of practicing Natural Family Planning. It does not instruct couples in how to use the method, but dispels various myths surrounding it and addresses initial questions about its use in marriage. The Church’s understanding of sexual intercourse as a renewal of marriage vows clarifies how a husband and wife who use Natural Family Planning strengthen their love and commitment to each other, to God, and to the virtues necessary for a joy-filled marriage.

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Ascension Press
PO Box 1990
West Chester, PA 19380
800-376-0520

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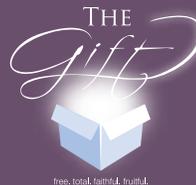
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Introduce *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage* into the current marriage program or preparation offered by your parish or diocese. To learn more about this program or to discuss questions you may have, please call us at

800-376-0520

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