

SESSION 1

DOES MARRIAGE MATTER?

SAMPLE

*Marriage
Enrichment*

The Mystery and Meaning of Marriage

Beloved™

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INTRODUCTION

Long before governments and societies ever discussed marriage, God put on the human heart a longing for the unique life-long 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.

OPENING PRAYER

Pray together the following prayer:

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.

"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



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

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

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?

“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

COUPLE'S DISCUSSION

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

2. What challenges or problems did your preconceived notions about marriage create?

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

—Genesis 2:24



CLOSING PRAYER

Pray together the following 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, “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.



COUPLE'S ACTIVITY

You 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, take some time to 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.

If you do not have a Catechism, there is an online version that you can find at: www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/

Take some time this week to read these paragraphs in the *Catechism* and really ponder the truths about marriage that God's plan reveals.

Then, discuss with each other how this plan affects how each of you views your marriage, and perhaps how you live out your marriage on a daily basis. Perhaps it helps you have a deeper appreciation for your marriage and your spouse, or gives you greater comfort in your marriage. It may also reveal some ways in which you have not been living your marriage as God desires. In any case, this is the beginning of this journey together to discover more deeply God's plan for your marriage.

Consider starting a marriage journal to record passages that have special meaning to you and your spouse.

