

What Is the JOY-FILLED MARRIAGE Program?

Helping prepare engaged couples to embrace God's plan for the sacrament of matrimony is an honor and a privilege. In today's climate, it is also a challenge. **Joy-Filled Marriage** is a marriage preparation program designed to meet that challenge. The two components of the program—**Life Skills for Couples** and **God's Plan for Love**—incorporate rich Catholic theology with sound psychology. This program offers a comprehensive approach to marriage preparation that covers not only the sacramentality and theology of marriage but also the practical life skills necessary to live out the rich Catholic vision of marriage.

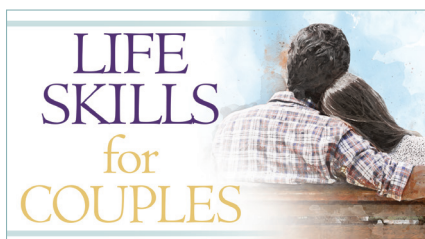


1. **Life Skills for Couples** is the “life skills” component of the program. A virtue-based program, *Life Skills for Couples* is designed to help the engaged couple set patterns of thought and behavior that will ensure a lifelong marriage. *Life Skills for Couples* trains couples in living the key virtues that foster lifelong marital love. Springing from the call of St. John Paul II to families and couples, *Life Skills for Couples* invites couples to explore their own uniqueness by seeking their identity and mission in Christ.

HIGHLIGHTS OF LIFE SKILLS FOR COUPLES:

- It is highly interactive. Engaging the couples in a variety of ways, the program calls them to be actively involved and uses effective learning approaches to reinforce the material.
- It is presented by witness couples—ordinary married couples who share the virtues needed for marriage through the lens of their real-life experiences of marriage.
- It is based on the virtues that affect every aspect of marriage—faith, hope, love, fairness (justice), balance (temperance), discernment (prudence), and perseverance (fortitude).

THE SIX SESSIONS:



Session One: Introduction to *Life Skills for Couples*

Session Two: Discovering Your Marriage Mission and the Role of Virtue

Session Three: Communicating Love – Learning and Respecting Love Styles

Session Four: Resolving Conflict – The Art of Loving Amidst Challenges

Session Five: Building Happiness – Managing Your Time, Money, and Energy

Session Six: Fostering Intimacy in Marriage – Sexuality and Prayer

2. **God's Plan for Love** is the sacramentality component of the *Joy-Filled Marriage* program. *God's Plan for Love* is, first and foremost, a catechesis in the Catholic vision of marriage, the human person, and the sacramental understanding of conjugal love. Employing the rich, affirming language of St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body, *God's Plan for Love* introduces engaged couples to a glorious vision of the sacrament of matrimony and conjugal love.

HIGHLIGHTS OF GOD'S PLAN FOR LOVE:

- The sessions help couples understand what they are saying, "I do," to. In the first three sessions, we unpack the biblical and historic Catholic vision of the sacrament of matrimony and what a couple is committing to at the altar. In the last three sessions, we catechize couples on the truth and meaning of human sexuality.
- *God's Plan* offers a refreshing, liberating vision of marriage and sexuality rather than a list of "prohibitions."
- The "difficult teachings" are given clear and pastoral explanations.

THE SIX SESSIONS:



Session One: God's Plan for Marriage "in the Beginning"

Session Two: Christ Restores God's Plan for Marriage

Session Three: To What Are You Saying, "I Do"?

Session Four: Where the Words of Your Vows Become Flesh

Session Five: The Beauty of Openness to Life

Session Six: Living God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage

Each couple receives a practical **Couple's Journal**, which is tied to both *God's Plan for Love* and *Life Skills for Couples*. In this journal, they capture their priorities, set concrete goals, and identify the next steps for building a joy-filled marriage. By the end of the program, the couples have a concrete post-workshop marriage plan and mission!

Life-Changing Results

"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.

Couples all across the country are responding favorably to the program, including the challenging catechesis found in the *God's Plan* portion of the program. Consider these statistics based on surveys of 3,000 couples from 2015 to 2017:

- Ninety-four percent of couples had an improved knowledge of the Church's teaching on marriage.
- Ninety-seven percent felt the program improved their relationship with God.
- Of the couples who had planned to use contraception before entering the program, twenty-four percent changed their minds and decided they would like to use Natural Family Planning.
- Of the sexually active couples entering the program, twenty percent decided to reserve sexual intimacy until their marriage.