

SPONSOR COUPLE PROGRAM - SESSION THREE

MARITAL INTIMACY

How close you are to your fiancé depends a great deal on how well you communicate and share together. And that depends greatly on how well you share your feelings. Because your fiancé is your future spouse, it is important for the two of you to share your feelings about sexuality and its genital expression in marriage.

Sexuality is one of God's greatest gifts to men and women. It is that aspect of personhood which makes us capable of entering into loving relationships with others. It is a relational power which includes the qualities of sensitivity, understanding, warmth, openness to persons, compassion and mutual support. Your sexuality largely conditions your progress in dealing with others in society. It is a side of personhood that needs to be developed by all who wish to respond to Jesus' command to become lovers. Marriage is meant to be a relationship in which the genital expression of your sexuality is shared fully and completely.

Keeping in mind the thoughts you just finished reading, please respond to the following points and questions. Do this privately; you will have a chance later to share answers with your fiancé.

COMMUNICATE FEELINGS

1. Indicate which of the following feelings you have experienced in the last two weeks.

Add as necessary 2x, 3x, 4x, etc.

_____ Boredom	_____ Excitement	_____ Frustration
_____ Jealousy	_____ Embarrassment	_____ Tenderness
_____ Anger	_____ Fear	_____ Shame
_____ Loneliness	_____ Joy	_____ Guilt
_____ Anxiety	_____ Sadness	_____ Sexual Arousal
_____ Silliness	_____ Impatience	_____ Other

2. What feelings am I/have I been hesitant to express to my fiancé?

3. What feelings do I sense my fiancé may be hesitant to express to me?

4. How important are the non-verbal signals in your relationship?

5. Do you ever find yourself misunderstood because your non-verbal signals do not clearly convey to the other person what you had in mind?

How do you avoid these problems?

Share and compare your answers with your fiancé. Discuss why you think you may have trouble expressing some particular feelings.

SEXUALITY

1. In my family of origin, sex was: (Check the responses that apply)

☐ Never discussed
☐ Viewed as a Gift from God
☐ Openly talked about
☐ The focus of many jokes
☐ Considered dirty
Other

2. Please check the lists below as honestly as you can.

<u>Reason for Sexual Intercourse</u>	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>
Having pleasure	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Communicating love	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Feeling secure	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Feeling power	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Creating children	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Feeling surrender	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Growing in love	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Releasing tension	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Mending problems	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Feeling loved	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Being sure of him/her	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Fulfilling a marriage duty	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Releasing anxiety	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Proving masculinity and femininity	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

3. Generally I think that sex (check each appropriate response):

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| _____ Is necessary for happiness | _____ Is exciting |
| _____ Is a source of joy | _____ Is mysterious |
| _____ Is a cause of problems in marriage | _____ Is more important to men |
| _____ Is easy to talk about | _____ Is more important to women |
| _____ Grows less important after marriage | _____ Is a subject we need to study |

Please complete the following statements and then share the results with your fiancé.

4. How much time do I plan to set aside for lovemaking in a week?

5. I feel most comfortable with/closest to my fiancé when ...

6. I feel least comfortable with/most remote from my fiancé when ...

7. What do I think about intimacy with sexual intercourse?

8. What worries me most about sex is ...

9. The most difficult subject to discuss concerning intimacy with my fiancé is ...

10. I have confidence and trust in my fiancé because ...

11. Talking with my fiancé about sexual matters is ...

12. I expect marriage to change our relationship in that ...

Please take a few minutes to write out any questions in the area of intimacy and sexuality about which you want more information. Perhaps you have questions about sexual morality or Church teachings relative to contraception or abortion. If your sponsor couple is unable to answer your questions, they will do all they can to help you find the answers. If necessary, they will direct you to someone who can answer the questions for you.

Possible topics of discussion: Natural Family Planning, Contraception, Abortion, Infertility, Impotence, Sex Drive, Expectations of Sex



CAR QUESTION

What do I expect to achieve through our sexual relationship in marriage?

HOME ASSIGNMENT

LOVE AND INTIMACY

What is love? Love is a power that enables me to share myself with another. It gives me the ability to create new relationships with other persons.

Love is a driving force that encourages me to focus my attention and affection on another person beyond myself. It makes me want to know and understand another. It gives me the courage to see and appreciate and accept the uniqueness of another. Love coaxes me to risk my very self with another. It gives me the courage to suffer hurt and loss so that the loved one can be spared hurt and loss.

Intimacy is the result of loving and being loved. When there is mutual and equal effort in our caring, in our giving of self, in our willingness to share and trust, in our acceptance of each other as different, then there is intimacy.

The degree of intimacy existing between us is made visible by certain signs or signals. Intimacy can be seen in such signs as a serious conversation, a handshake, a warm embrace, a generous deed, a supportive hug, walking arm in arm, a caress, a love letter, a sharing of sexual arousal. Each of these signs speaks in a special language about the degree of intimacy within our love relationship. The signs are a necessity because intimacy itself is a spiritual, invisible reality which we attempt to communicate to each other in our signs of love. The sign of intimacy which can express total, complete giving of self and acceptance of the other person is sexual intercourse.

Sexual intercourse can be the sign of the fullest and most total intimacy between us because it is a self-giving which implies no taking back. Physically, I say, "I give you my whole body, my whole self." This physical action implies a giving of self that is total at every level of existence: physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. It is an action by which I say, "I love you completely and I accept you completely." It is at the same time an action by which I say, "I accept and treasure your body, your heart, your mind, your soul, your every thought and emotion, all of you."

Sexual intercourse is meant to be much more than the physical experiences of arousal and orgasm. Physical and passionate intimacy is one part of our giving and receiving. It is one expression of our intense desire to share all of our ideals and ideas, feelings and opinions, hopes and dreams. Sexual intercourse, with its potential for such deep and varied meaning, is far more than the physical experience of orgasm. It is a ritual whereby totally committed lovers affirm and reaffirm their decision to give and receive each other at every level of their being. There is union of spirits as well as bodies. For this reason, the passion of our lovemaking can become more and more valued, precious, and sacred to the two of us.

It is with these thoughts in mind that the Church considers sexual intercourse to be of such tremendous value. Because of the Christian tradition of seeing sexual intercourse as a sign of total, complete and everlasting giving of love and self, the Church considers sexual intercourse to be the most perfect sign of Christian married love. This is why the Church insists that sexual intercourse between persons who are not married is a misuse of this precious sign.

Sexual intercourse between any two people will mean only what those two people intend it to mean. Even for the same couple, it can mean different things at different times. It is essential therefore, to talk about the meaning sexual intercourse will have for you and your fiancé. The following questions will be of great help to you if you first write out your answers privately, then share and discuss them with each other.

1. "Every act of sexual intercourse is a renewal of our marital vows."

What does this statement mean to me?

2. How do our pleasurable, life-giving moments reflect the faithful, permanent love we have for each other?

3. How do I see artificial contraception as an interruption of the vows we've made between ourselves and God?

4. Can I commit to postponing the expression of our love by sexual intercourse until after we are married?

5. The question about sex that I've always wanted to ask you (but didn't know how) is:

6. If our sex life was in trouble, would I want to seek counseling? Do I think you would agree to it?

MARRIAGE: SIGN OF GOD'S FAITHFUL LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE

Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." (Genesis 1:26)

The Lord God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him."
(Genesis 2:18)

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame. (Genesis 2:24-25)

The Jewish-Christian traditions of marriage reflected in the Book of Genesis stand in marked contrast to the traditions of ancient peoples. Many of the ancient religions taught that human beings were evil creatures, or victims and playthings of the gods. Women were not considered to be completely human: thus marriage was not a union of equals. To think of marriage as something sacred, related to praise of the gods, would have been considered an absurdity.

Wonderfully, by contrast, is the biblical view. Yahweh, the God of the Bible, was not content to make us like himself; he also chose to love us as members of his own divine family. This is the meaning of the covenant he initiated between himself and his chosen people.

The Bible contains many images of this covenant. Perhaps the most beautiful symbol of this special relationship between God and ourselves is the human relationship we call marriage. The writers of the Bible rely heavily on this rich sign of life and love to attempt to explain the kind of intimacy God wants us to have with him.

In the Old Testament book the Song of Songs, God is presented as a bridegroom longing for his prospective bride. “You have ravished my heart ... my bride; with one glance of your eyes, with one bead of your necklace. How beautiful is your love ... my bride; how much more delightful is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your ointments than all spices! Your lips drip honey; my bride ... the fragrance of your garments is the fragrance of Lebanon.” (Song of Songs 4:9-11)

In the book of Hosea, God speaks: “So I will allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart ... on that day, she shall call me Amy husband” ... I will make a covenant for them on that day ... I will espouse you to me forever: I will espouse you in right and in justice, in love and in mercy; I will espouse you in fidelity, and you shall know the Lord.” (Hosea 2:16-22)

In the New Testament letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul turns the symbol around. He uses the intimacy between God and his spouse, the Church, to inspire and challenge the institution of marriage as it ought to be lived by disciples of Jesus. “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church. He gave himself up for her to make her holy, purifying her in the bath of water by the power of the word to present to himself a glorious church, holy and immaculate, without stain or wrinkle or anything of that sort. Husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies ... This is a great foreshadowing; I mean that it refers to Christ and the Church.” (Ephesians 5:25-32)

The covenant of marriage is a humanly understandable reality in which and through which we experience God loving and caring for us.

1. What does it mean to you that your marriage is intended to be an “intimate covenant of life and love”?

2. Why is Christian marriage called a ‘covenant’ rather than a ‘contract’?

3. Considering your present relationship with your fiancé, what does your relationship say to other people about God's love?

4. When you are married, what will you do to make your relationship even more clearly a sign of Jesus' own commitment to his Church as Saint Paul requests?

5. "The love of husband and wife is the best working model by which we can understand how much God loves each person." What is your reaction to that statement?
