



“Challenges in the First Five Years of Marriage”
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Marriage Prep Workshop
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Common Challenges That Couples Have In First Five Years Of Marriage

1. Transition of Being In Love to Real Love

- Being In Love
 - Lasts about 2 years
 - Based on emotions – feels good, obsessional
 - Very little conflict
 - Annoyances don’t bother us
 - Necessary state of the relationship
 - Not growing in the relationship
- Real Love
 - Love is no longer just emotional but becomes a choice
 - Couples encourage one another to grow

2. 6-6-9 Plan (Meet, Date for 6 months, engaged for 6 months, 9 months later have a baby)

- Common for faithful Catholic couples
- Couple ends up transitioning out of the “In Love” Stage at the same time as they have an infant
- Add no family support this makes for a difficult transition
- Couple tends to become business partners instead of spouses, stop connecting emotionally, push away the emotions to deal with the stress – counseling the couple centers around getting them to talk to one another for 15 minutes a day only about each other, remember the curiosity that they had when they met

3. Learn to Have Productive Conflict

- Couples need really specific tools:
 - Time-out - need time to calm down, do not deal with things while you are operating out of emotion using the back part of your brain, frontal lobe of the brain does not develop until mid 20’s to early 30’s so young couples may have more issues with this
 - Finances – couples need to have a budget, money is usually tight
 - Limit daily conversations about business matters or subjects of conflict – no more than 15 min per day
 - Have a regular business meeting (once a week) to discuss schedule, finances, work, so that the daily interactions have room for more emotion



4. Isolation and Lack of Local Family Support – no nearby family

- Couples don't have a break from the kids
 - If possible, it's good for the children to have another adult relative in their lives (grandparent, aunt, uncle)
- Couples become isolated – hard to get out of the house with infant/small children
- Parishes can provide programs for couples that include childcare
- Parishes can foster community for couples in this state of life so they can support one another

5. Family of Origin Issues

- Most couples have at least one set of parents that are no longer married - no frame of reference for what healthy conflict looks like
- My family has always done things this way, his/her family has always done things that way
- We either want to be like our parents, or not at all like our parents
- Couples need to establish their own traditions early in their marriage
- If extended families are both out of state, there are issues figuring out how and when to visit them – this adds to the isolation issue

6. Keeping Proper Structure of the Family – most common issue couples deal with

- God > Husband & Wife > Children
 - It is counter-cultural to put the husband/wife relationship over the children's activities – I/we can't do that because our child has x activity
 - Couples who keep the hierarchy in the right order have less issues
 - Structure often gets inverted where kids come first
 - Husband is often at the bottom of the hierarchy – when that happens he just deals with it until he chooses to do something that ends up harming the relationship
 - Adds to the issue of couples becoming business partners

7. Physical Intimacy – Sex

- Prevalence of pornography
 - Puts a lot of pressure on couples
 - Couples need to be able to talk about it
 - Husband and wife have no one to talk with about it – no natural support, close relationship with mother or father
 - Guys who struggle with porn use need to have a male accountability partner
 - Wife needs to be let in – she needs to know if he is working on it
 - Non-Catholic counselors may encourage couples to use pornography in a marriage to help with sexual issues, majority of mainstream counseling profession does not see use of pornography as a negative in a marriage
- One person has saved themselves for marriage, the other has lived according to the culture



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