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Syllabus Handouts

Table of Contents

How Do You Make Your Spouse Feel Appreciated?	3
Making Dinner Table Conversations Count	6
Taking Care of Ourselves Physically & Emotionally	9
Are you a Good Friend?.....	14
Taking Catholic Truth to the Voting Booth	17
Membership in the Church Militant and the Catholic Spirit of Knighthood	19
How do you go from being a parent to a mentor with your adult children?.....	24
I Didn't Know I Married My In-Laws, Too	28
Knowing God's Will	31
Strategies for Keeping Your Kids or Grandkids Catholic	35
How to talk about and manage money within your family	40
Balance in Our Life: What can we learn from St. Benedict and Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta? ...	46
Shared Dreams and Communications	51
Mentor – Do you have one? Do you need one?	56
How to be Happy in Life	59
Letting Our Children Fail.....	61
Getting Through Spiritual Dry Spells	63
Reconciliation	66
Sex in your Marriage: Is it as God intended or not at all?.....	75
Dealing with Loss	77
Why do we “have to” go to Mass???	81
Do you believe in miracles?	84
Teaching your Children the importance of God, Family and Friends.....	86
Love Thy Neighbor	94
Talking and Listening to God	96
Disciplining Your Children: Love in Action	102
Divorce – Is Your Marriage at Risk?.....	105
Religion in the Media	108
Supporting Aging Parents.....	110
Empty nesting – how do you deal with the children moving on?.....	114

How Do You Make Your Spouse Feel Appreciated?

Summary

Whether it has been one year or fifty since your wedding, what are you doing to let the awesome person you married know that you appreciate them? Routine is a good thing, but making someone feel special is a GREAT thing and everyone likes to feel appreciated. Get your creative juices flowing and demonstrate to your wife how special she is!

Objective

A majority of the problems that occur in a marriage can be attributed to the fact that one or both partners feel unappreciated. Boredom with the relationship, jealousy, nagging and a general sense of discontent are marriage relationship problems that find their roots in a sense of not being appreciated. Your goal as a husband is to realize this, then take action. Improve your marriage relationship “by doing” and let your wife know she is appreciated by you.

Bible Readings

1. Ephesians 5:25-30

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So (also) husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

2. Colossians 3:19

Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1639

The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself. From their covenant arises "an institution, confirmed by the divine law, . . . even in the eyes of society." The covenant between the spouses is integrated into God's covenant with man: "Authentic married love is caught up into divine love."

Small Group Questions

1. What is something unique that you have done that made your spouse feel appreciated?
2. What are the root causes that may make your wife to feel unappreciated by you?
3. What will you do in the next week to show your wife she is appreciated by you?

Recommended Resources

1. Husbands, sons, priests – my plea to you to not ruin Mother’s Day...
<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/thecrescat/2012/05/husbands-sons-priests-my-plea-to-you-to-not-ruin-mothers-day.html>
2. 10 Ways to Love Your Spouse
<http://www.simplecatholicliving.com/reflections/10-ways-to-love-your-spouse>

Accountability

1. Do one thing for your wife this week that she will be able to tell her friends about that you have never done before.
2. Investigate and search fun things going on in town and recommend that the two of you need to make a plan to attend or participate.
3. Secretly do a chore around the house you have never done and see if anyone notices.

Author(s)

Reid Rooney

Included Resources

1. The 5 Step Secret to making your wife Feel Appreciated

Step 1 Understanding: Although you cannot make anyone 100% happy, you can do your part in making your wife feel special and appreciated. The wife (like the husband) has a unique and key role in the marital partnership. If she feels abandoned, neglected, or otherwise unappreciated it will be difficult for her to maintain that positive ambiance.

Step 2 Show Direct Appreciation: Women need the small things that may be easily overlooked. A phone call in the middle of the day for no reason; fresh flower arrangements; date night; unexpected tokens of affection, etc. Keep note of her interests and use them to personalize your surprises i.e. if she’s dieting do not get her chocolates.

Step 3 Acknowledgement: You may not understand her emotional needs but you definitely need to acknowledge them. Take the time to actively listen to her. Be the initiator of conversations. Be nonjudgmental with your opinions.

Step 4 Pick your Battles: Let the small things pass. Arguing or a domineering attitude will only fester and eventually poison the love you share. If it irritates you that she isn't the best housekeeper, try to hire help or help clean up when you have time. Remember that you are not perfect either. Was it her laugh you fell in love with or her clean kitchen?

Step 5 Tell her you love her everyday. Tell others you love her. Hearing it and saying it will keep the love alive. Love is a chain reaction. The more love you give the more love you receive.

2. Other ideas to show direct Appreciation to your wife:

Acts of service.

Doing something special for your wife is an easy and free way to show your appreciation. A foot rub after a long day of work would be greatly appreciated. Use some scented lotion for a bit of aromatherapy as well. Clean the house! Coming home to a messy house can be very stressful. If you are home during the day on a weekend, keeping the house clean shows your appreciation for the hard work your wife does.

Making your spouse's favorite meal or dessert on an ordinary day is a terrific way to make her feel special, especially if you don't make it very often. Or make something new for dinner to try together; the same old things can get boring after a while.

Whatever your spouse's job around the house is, give her a day off. Who wouldn't feel special and enjoy not having to do a chore? Folding the laundry, doing the dishes for once and let your spouse enjoy a little well-deserved rest.

Offer a massage. Don't do it because you want one in return. Don't wait until your wife asks. Just offer one to show that you really enjoy the act of touching the person that you're in a love with.

Treats and Surprises.

A simple and inexpensive way to surprise your wife with a treat is to pick up her favorite treats at the grocery store. Then you can sneak them into a her purse or computer bag for your wife to find and enjoy at work or out running errands. Or leave a treat on the pillow or nightstand, or in a coat pocket.

Leave your spouse alone to do a hobby, with no strings attached. She is probably tired of hearing you complain when she is watching TV while the laundry is not done. Let her have a night off to do her own thing, and don't be looking over her shoulder. Or your wife might enjoy a night out

Show your appreciation.

If your spouse works hard at a job, thank her for working hard for you and your family. A simple thank you can mean a lot. Send an "I love you" text message, or leave a message on your spouse's voicemail. If your spouse travels out of town on business, write love notes and hide them in the luggage. Put one in her purse, in reading materials, tucked in a shoe etc. You could even have the kids write notes, or draw pictures so your wife will know how much she will be missed by you and your family. Hiding love notes around the house works just as well.

Say thank you.

It turns out that it's the little things that count. Mom and Dad probably taught you that you're supposed to say thanks when someone does something nice for you but you may have picked up their bad habits of failing to say it to one another. Don't take anything that your wife does for you for granted.

Create an appreciation scrapbook.

Take the time to sit down and put together a list of all of the things that you appreciate about your wife. Go through magazines and find images that go along with each item. Use these images to create pages for a scrapbook that depicts the things that you appreciate. Your wife will appreciate this gift for a long time.

Try to notice the small things.

The small haircut that she got on the way home from the store or the new seasoning that was used on a meal are all really small things but noticing them goes a long way towards making your wife feel like you're actually paying attention and appreciating what you've got.

Do things that your wife likes.

When figuring out what you want to do over the weekend, consider trying things that you don't love but you know your wife really enjoys. It won't kill you to sit through a chick flick and it will make your wife feel appreciated.

The Husband does not feel appreciated by his wife.

In some cases, the husband may often wish that his wife would do things to show us that we are appreciated. Try to think in the reverse instead; make an effort to show your wife that you're appreciative of the marriage. This will improve things drastically and probably produce the results that you as a husband are looking for.

Making Dinner Table Conversations Count

Summary

Dads, do you make good use of dinner table time to communicate with your children? Do you even make time for dinner as a family? How can you take an ordinary meal and turn it into a time to listen to your children and reach them on a new level?

Objective

Our lives are so busy with work, taking Johnny to football, taking Mary to soccer, and all the many engagements and obligations we have to deal with. How can we as fathers:

- Preserve and enhance family values by eating together as a family
- Take the opportunity to hear what our children have to say about their lives
- Take the opportunity to create learning moments of our Christian values
- Take the opportunity to see how our children interact with each other
- Strengthen the example we are as Husband and Wife, a team, in front of our children

Bible Readings

1. Deuteronomy 6: 6-7

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

2. Hebrews 12: 7-11

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

3. Matthew 18: 10-14

See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1601

"The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament

2. Paragraph 2223

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones." Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them:

He who loves his son will not spare the rod. . . . He who disciplines his son will profit by him.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

3. Paragraph 1784

The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human weakness and faults. The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.

Small Group Questions

1. How often do you have dinner together as a family? Have you and your wife made this a priority? Do you have a target number of days where you make an effort to make this happen?
2. How important was dinner as a family to your upbringing? Do you engender that same or an improved experience?
3. Who is the first up from the dinner table? Is it you because you have so much to do?
4. Do you encourage each of your children to talk during dinner? Do you take the time to reinforce positive values and actions. Can you do this without passing judgment in front of everyone?
5. How do you manage to talk to your children and communicate Christian values without being too much of a preacher?

Recommended Resources

1. Family Dinner Conversation Starters
http://fatherhood.about.com/od/challenges/a/dinner_talk.htm

Accountability

1. If you don't have a set goal of having dinner as a family, discuss this with your wife and set a goal.
2. When you do have dinner as a family, set a goal to listen and be the LAST one up from the table.
3. Look for ways to increase family discussion and bonding around the dinner table, you'll be amazed how it carries through in their adult lives as siblings.

Author(s)

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Included Resources

1. Article by Eronne Ward:
<http://ezinearticles.com/?Eating-Dinner-With-the-Family---Its-More-Important-Than-You-Might-Think&id=2450865>

When was the last time you had dinner with your family? It is the meal we often skip because we work late, the kids have sporting events or we get tired from daily activities. But, skipping dinner with the family is not a good practice. In fact, it is detrimental to the family dynamic.

There are some interesting facts surrounding family dinner time. For instance, teens that spend dinner time eating with their family are less likely to get involved in drugs, alcohol or other illicit activity. This is a point many parents will find interesting. Out of all of the things you do to try to keep your kids away from bad influences, the one thing that is the greatest influence is still the event that we skip routinely.

Family dinners are more than just a meal. It is about the only time that families have to share time through the week. Whether you sit down to the dinner table or enjoy a meal and a movie on tray tables in the family room, the important thing is that you are together.

The main point is that conversation is taking place. The average parent talks to their child less than 40 minutes a week. It takes a second to say "Hi" when you come in at night, but that isn't effective communication. When dinner is shared by the family, you spend at least 45 minutes to an hour talking about everything and anything that may be on your mind. Even if you are watching a television program, engaging questions can arise from topics addressed in the program.

Why is dinner so important? For one thing, it is a time to share thoughts and feelings. All day, kids are influenced by teachers, friends and the outside world. At the dinner table, they get a chance to connect with their parents on tough issues like schoolwork, peer pressure, friendships and other things. Children can each share and help one another with helpful suggestions. Parents can even talk about work or family finances over a meal.

Young children learn how to communicate with their siblings and parents. They are the center of attention with questions about their day and it makes them feel happy. You know that kids always want to be in the limelight when they are a certain age and this helps them learn to share the spot with others.

For teenage girls, body image is often a very relevant issue. Through family dinners, they can learn to prepare and eat healthy meals, learn that eating right will keep their bodies in shape, and of utmost importance, learn not to avoid food. Teen girls are less likely to become the victim of an eating disorder and more likely to develop a healthy view of food and their bodies when they eat dinner with their families.

There are many benefits to eating dinner with the family. It is a time for meaningful communication that leads to stronger self-images, as well as a greater resistance to the urges of drugs, alcohol, peer-pressure, and other destructive behaviors in your kids and teens. For all these reasons as well as to help unite the family, a concerted effort should be made to make family dinners a common practice.

2. FAMILY DINNER CONVERSATION STARTERS...great 1 page grid with examples...
http://www.iespta.org/files/FAMILY_DINNER_CONVERSATION_STARTERS.pdf

Taking Care of Ourselves Physically & Emotionally

Summary

We take care of our family and your responsibilities at work. What are we doing to take care of ourselves?

Objective

We have a lot on our plates. We're fathers, husbands, children, friends and employees. Many of us are constantly juggling our responsibilities at work with our responsibilities at home. We take care of our wives, children, and perhaps parents. Do we take care of ourselves? Our emotional and physical health are interconnected – good physical health promotes good emotional health and vice versa. What are we doing to ensure we have good physical and emotional health?

Bible Readings

1. 1 Corinthians, Chapter 6, 19

Do you not know that your body is a temple* of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

2. 1 Corinthians, Chapter 6, 20

For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2288

Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good.

2. Paragraphs 2290

The virtue of temperance disposes us to *avoid every kind of excess*: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco, or medicine. Those incur grave guilt who, by drunkenness or a love of speed, endanger their own and others' safety on the road, at sea, or in the air.

Small Group Questions

1. Do you make time to work out on a consistent basis?
2. Do you schedule regular appointments with your health care professionals?
3. What are you doing to ensure your wife and children lead healthy lives?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://healthpsychology.org/health-psychology-promotes-emotional-and-physical-health/>
2. <http://www.everydayhealth.com/emotional-health/understanding/index.aspx>

Accountability

1. Take a health risk assessment if offered by your insurance company.

2. Commit to starting an exercise routine. Invite your wife or a friend to join you to ensure accountability.
3. Commit to making changes to improve your diet.

Author(s)

Ken Mai

Included Resources

1. Health Psychology Promotes Emotional and Physical Health

Written by [Dr. Cheryl MacDonald, RN, Psy'D.](#) on July 28, 2011

<http://healthpsychology.org/health-psychology-promotes-emotional-and-physical-health/>

A *Health Psychology* belief is with developing an understanding of how biological, sociological, environmental and cultural factors relate to *physical and emotional health*. Studies are beginning to explain that negative emotions such as anger, rage, depression, anxiety, jealousy and envy, have a connection to one's physical condition. One common example of the mind-body relationship is when people experience anxiety or stress the blood pressure rises. Complete health depends on a healthy mind and body, and I will be explaining the basic understanding of this relationship along with providing a few tips to maintain health.

What is the Physical Connection between Mind and Body?

There is a physical connection between what the mind is thinking and those parts of the brain that control bodily functions. According to Charles Goodstein, MD, clinical professor of psychiatry, New York University School of Medicine, the brain directly connects to the endocrine system, which secretes hormones or chemicals that can have a powerful influence on emotional health. "Thoughts and feelings that generate within the mind can influence the outpouring of hormones from the endocrine system, which in effect controls much of what goes on within the body," says Dr. Goodstein.

Simply put, to be healthy people must take care of not only their emotional health, but also their physical health. If one is neglected, the other will suffer. People who visit their doctors reporting symptoms of headache, lethargy, weakness, or vague abdominal symptoms often end up with the diagnosis of depression; even though they may not discuss feelings associated with depression. While sad or anxious feelings may not directly cause poor physical health, they are certainly contributing factors associated with physical health and an individual's quality of life.

The field of health psychology focuses on promoting health which includes the prevention and treatment of physical diseases. The Health Psychologists focus is on understanding how people react, cope and recover from illness, along with improving the quality of lives of people with chronic and terminal illnesses. When there is little hope of recovery, it is the health psychologist who can improve the quality of life by helping people work with the loss and recover at least some sense of emotional well-being. One other interest is with identifying the best ways for providing therapeutic services for the bereaved in coping with the loss of a loved one.

Tips for Taking Care of Emotional and Physical Health

Take care of yourself physically. Many people do not understand the fact that when they take care of themselves physically, they take care of themselves emotionally. There is a relationship between neglecting the body and the development of emotional and physical problems. This neglect creates a toxic cycle. To end this cycle, strengthen the body with enough rest, food, and liquids. Make sure that there is enough air, nutritious food and exercise in your life. Warm and refresh yourself when needed. Eat right; a healthy, proper diet is beneficial for the body and mind. Research has proven that exercise improves mood and has numerous benefits for physical and emotional health. I am aware that this is limited information; however, many people do not understand these basic facts. People do not have to be perfect and try to not to let physical care become an obsession, which may then become a problem. Consider the fact that when people

ignore the physical needs of their body this abandonment will create an emotional and a physical problem, which in turn creates a toxic life cycle. Therefore, people feel physically and emotionally unstable.

Pay attention to body signals. When the body is in need of something, we experience feelings that correspond to what their body is lacking. One example of ignoring a signal is when people do not pay attention to hunger when trying to loose weight and they begin to starve themselves. This starvation, in turn, slows down the metabolism and will in the long run prevent weight loss. The body sends messages when to eat, sleep, relax, calm down, play and comfort ourselves. Go to bed on time. Loosing sleep is hard on the heart, may increase weight, and undeniably sparks up the crankiness meter. Do not ignore the protective bodily signals. Listen to what it is saying.

Be socially active. The bottom line is that love and attention are almost as valuable as the air that we breathe. Most will crave it unless they receive it, so seek it out, for your emotional health. Take time out for relaxation and socializing as this is beneficial for emotional and physical health. Give and receive love and attention to both others and yourself. As quoted, from C.J. Lewis, "Affection is responsible for nine-tenths of whatever solid and durable happiness there is in our lives". People are social beings from birth to death.

Take care of yourself with relaxation. People should be spending a third of their time on leisure and/or play. Relaxation is another form of nurturing mental health as the mind needs the opportunity to re-charge. People also need time to process or understand thoughts and feelings. If people stay busy all of the time, then they are not giving themselves enough time to process and strengthen the mind and body. If a third of your time is too much to ask for, then at least set aside an hour or two a day, just for you. Set aside some time to relax and have fun.

When you fail at something have the courage to try again. Everyone makes mistakes in life. Try to work at forgiving yourself for making those mistakes. Trying again improves self esteem and creates an overall sense of feeling empowered, which in turn increases endorphins, thereby lifting mood.

Visit the appropriate Doctor, the one that is the perfect match for your condition. Going to the right doctor can make all the difference in overall health, especially if there is a complex illness that requires a specialist. Try to be open to seeing a mental health professional, if feelings and emotions are getting in the way of recovery.

How do people get in touch with their body?

Take deep breaths and listen to what your body is saying. Once people are in touch with the feeling, they then need to determine how they are going to manage or control the feeling. Sometimes feelings are not true or based on facts, and people can perceive situations incorrectly, as they are of the imagination. If the feeling is not based on facts, then attempt to undo this misperception, as people are only hurting themselves. Try not to get caught up with feelings of shame and guilt as these emotions are a waste of valuable time and for most of us are by products of the imagination.

However, for short periods of time if the imagination or dreaming makes people happy, it is acceptable to enjoy the feeling. Just remember that this is wishful thinking and that people are tricking themselves into feeling pleasure. To learn new ways to cope with feelings, start with a small baby step. For example, if there is a problem with anger, attempt to be aware of the feeling, and take a few deep breaths before reacting.

Health Psychology Promotes Emotional and Physical Health

Health psychology principles' and cognitive behavioral therapies continue to be overlooked by the general population and the medical profession. These methods require the physician to be aware of other successful treatment modalities. Health Psychology requires individuals to make a commitment to take responsibility for their own physical and emotional health. Until health psychology principles are accepted by the medical community and until the client begins to follow these principles, the emotional and physical condition will continue to ravage the mind and body.

In conclusion, unhealthy behaviors, from smoking cigarettes and poor diet, to living a sedentary lifestyle and having poor coping skills, are all significant factors leading to death and disability. Take the time to care for both the mind and body. People can make positive, healthy changes in their life by learning specific skills. Practice the above, few steps consistently in life and over time people will indeed notice improvements in their physical and emotional well being. This is the joyful news!

2. Happiness and Emotional Well-Being

<http://www.everydayhealth.com/emotional-health/understanding/index.aspx>

A healthy diet and exercise are great for your body, but don't neglect your emotional health and well-being. Reducing stress, getting enough sleep, and having fun are all ways to find happiness.

By Diana Rodriguez

Medically reviewed by Pat F. Bass III, MD, MPH

When your mind is frazzled and stressed, and your emotions are taking over your thoughts and affecting your everyday activities, it's time to take a step back, take a deep breath, and relax. Of course focusing on your physical health is crucial, but so is treating your mind and spirit to the same attention. Your happiness goes a long way in protecting your overall well-being.

Happiness and Well-Being: Why It's Important

Emotions are one aspect of a person's health that often get neglected. But if your [emotional health](#) is suffering, your physical health will too.

Your emotional health is just a term for how you feel — your overall happiness and well-being. Are you stressed? Unhappy? Unsatisfied? Worried and anxious? Then your emotional health needs some serious attention, or your body will start paying the price.

Happiness and Well-Being: How It Feels

Being emotionally healthy is a huge plus. People with good emotional health:

Believe that there is a good balance to their life between leisure time, activity, and work

Feel good about themselves, and don't suffer from self-esteem issues

Believe that there is a purpose to their lives

Are able to accept changes better and just go with the flow

Enjoy living, and know the value of fun and laughter

Have less stress, and are better equipped to deal with [stress](#)

Have better [relationships](#) with others

Are contented with their lives

Happiness and Well-Being: When All's Not Well

"If we do not care for ourselves, frustration, tension, anger, and poor health can develop," says Sally R. Connolly, a clinical social worker, therapist and co-founder of CounselingRelationshipsOnline.com, an online counseling service.

Even when you know how important it is to take good care of your emotions, it can still be a tall order. It can be tough to find time for yourself, and some people may feel guilty about pampering or spoiling themselves from time to time. Others may just ignore their feelings and stressors and hope they just go away. However, they usually don't — and at some point, unaddressed emotional problems often result in serious consequences, from illness to relationship problems to harmful behavior.

"Many of us, women especially, have the irrational belief that caring for ourselves or putting our own mental and emotional health first is selfish," says Connolly. "Women are reared to be caregivers and usually put themselves last."

Happiness and Well-Being: Getting Started

Taking Care of Ourselves Physically & Emotionally

Make a decision to do something nice for yourself every day and stick to it.

"For many people it has to be a conscious process," says Connolly. "They must take time to do it. I often recommend some simple ritual as a way of honoring themselves." She recommends something as simple as daily meditation to inspire peace and relaxation.

Other rituals might involve:

Getting up a few minutes early to drink your morning coffee in peace

Taking a walk every day

Having regularly scheduled events with close friends or family

Finding time to be alone with your spouse

Happiness and Well-Being: Tips for Emotional Health

Focusing on your emotional health isn't hard, but it may be an adjustment for you.

Some simple — and really enjoyable — changes are all it takes to boost happiness and well-being. Follow these ideas to strengthen your emotional health:

Exercise. It protects physical and emotional health, relieves stress, and makes you feel good.

Make time for laziness. You don't have to be constantly on the go — that's how you get run down. Spend a little time each day or each week doing something you enjoy that is completely frivolous. For example, watch TV or a silly movie, chat on the phone, play a game, or just listen to music.

Spend some time in the sun. With sunscreen, of course. But sunlight is a great natural way to boost your mood.

Deal with your emotions. Learn how to properly deal with stress, anger, and anxiety instead of keeping them bottled up inside.

Be healthy inside. This means avoiding junk food and sticking to a healthy diet. You should also steer clear of smoking, drug use, and too much alcohol.

Treat your senses. Do little things that make you happy and stimulate your senses, like lighting a scented candle, buying some fresh-cut flowers, indulging in a [massage](#), or treating yourself to your favorite food or drink.

Sleep. Everyone gets cranky without enough sleep, so dedicate adequate sleep time every night. Or treat yourself to a nap every now and then.

Be creative. Spend some time learning new things, like a new language or skill (for example, music or knitting). Even just working in your garden can help you relax and feel satisfied.

Adopt an animal. Pets offer fun, relaxation, and a whole lot of love. They can encourage you to exercise, and tear your attention away from stressful activities.

The bottom line is pretty simple: take time for happiness. Allow yourself to enjoy life, fun, and relaxation. Be thankful for what you have, and enjoy it.

Are you a Good Friend?

Summary

Do you extend yourself to other men? How can you do a better job of serving the Men of the Parish or your workplace?

Objective

Jesus is the finest example of a true Christian friend. His love for us is sacrificial, never selfish. He demonstrated it not only through his miracles of healing, but more fully through the humble service of washing the disciples' feet, and then ultimately when he laid down his life on the cross.

If we choose our friends based only on what they have to offer, we'll rarely discover the blessings of a genuine friendship. Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." By valuing your friend's needs above your own, you'll be on your way to loving like Jesus. In the process, you'll likely gain a true friend.

Bible Readings

1. Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12

Two are better than one: they get a good wage for their labor. If the one fails, the other will lift up his companion. Woe to the solitary man! For if he should fail, he has no one to lift him up. So also, if two sleep together, they keep each other warm. Where a lone man may be overcome, two together can resist. A three-ply cord is not easily broken.

2. John 15: 13-15

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2010

Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, *no one can merit the initial grace* of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, *we can then merit* for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God's wisdom. These graces and goods are the object of Christian prayer. Prayer attends to the grace we need for meritorious actions. (1998) "Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life."

Small Group Questions

1. How can I utilize my friendships made in the Father's Team to become more Christlike?...
2. What methods can I utilize this week to help me build up emotionally, spiritually & physically the Men of my small group?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://christianity.about.com/od/womensresources/a/christianfriends.htm>
2. <http://christianity.about.com/od/lossanddying/a/vernesfriend.htm>

Are you a Good Friend?

Author(s)

Bob Considine

Included Resources

5 Traits of True Christian Friends

<http://christianity.about.com/od/womensresources/a/christianfriends.htm>

3 Types of Christian Friendships:

Mentor Friendship

The first form of Christian friendship Honeytree talked about was a mentor friendship. In a mentoring relationship we teach, counsel or disciple other Christian friends. This is a relationship based on ministry, similar to the kind Jesus had with his disciples.

Mentee Friendship

In a mentee friendship, we are the one being taught, counseled, or disciplined. We are on the receiving end of ministry, being served by a mentor. This is similar to the way the disciples received from Jesus.

Mutual Friendship

Mutual friendships are not based on mentoring. Rather, in these situations the two individuals are usually more closely aligned on a spiritual level, balancing the natural flow of giving and receiving between genuine Christian friends. We'll explore mutual friendships more closely, but first, it's important to have a clear understanding of mentoring relationships, so we don't get the two confused.

Mentoring friendships can easily become draining if both parties don't recognize the nature of the relationship and construct appropriate boundaries. The mentor may need to pull back and take time for spiritual renewal. He may even have to say no at times, setting limits on his commitment to the mentee.

Likewise, a mentee who expects too much from his mentor is probably seeking a mutual bond with the wrong person. Mentees must respect boundaries and look for close friendship with someone other than a mentor.

We can be both mentor and mentee, but not with the same friend. We may know a mature believer who mentors us in God's Word, while in turn, we take time to mentor a brand new follower of Christ.

Mutual friendships are quite different than mentoring friendships. These relationships don't usually happen overnight. Typically, they develop over time as both friends progress in wisdom and spiritual maturity. A strong Christian friendship blossoms naturally when two friends grow together in faith, goodness, knowledge, and other godly graces.

5 Traits of True Christian Friends

So, what does a true Christian friendship look like? Let's break it down into traits that are easy to identify.

Christian Friends Love Sacrificially

John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (NIV)

Jesus is the finest example of a true Christian friend. His love for us is sacrificial, never selfish. He demonstrated it not only through his miracles of healing, but more fully through the humble service of washing the disciples' feet, and then ultimately, when he [laid down his life on the cross](#).

If we choose our friends based only on what they have to offer, we'll rarely discover the blessings of a genuine friendship. Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." By valuing your friend's needs above your own, you'll be on your way to [loving like Jesus](#). In the process, you'll likely gain a true friend.

Christian Friends Accept Unconditionally

Proverbs 17:17

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. (NIV)

Are you a Good Friend?

We discover the best of friendships with brothers and sisters who know and accept our weaknesses and imperfections.

If we're easily offended or hold on to [bitterness](#), we'll have a hard time making friends. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes now and then. If we take a truthful look at ourselves, we'll admit that we bear some of the blame when things go wrong in a friendship. A good friend is quick to ask [forgiveness](#) and ready to be forgiving.

Christian Friends Trust Completely

Proverbs 18:24

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. [\(NIV\)](#)

This proverb reveals that a true Christian friend is trustworthy, indeed, but emphasizes a second important truth as well. We should only expect to share complete trust with a few loyal friends. Trusting too easily can lead to ruin, so be careful about putting your confidence in a mere companion. Over time our true Christian friends will prove their trustworthiness by sticking closer than a brother or sister.

Christian Friends Keep Healthy Boundaries

1 Corinthians 13:4

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy ... [\(NIV\)](#)

If you feel smothered in a friendship, something is wrong. Likewise, if you feel used or abused, something is amiss. Recognizing what's best for someone and giving that person space are signs of a healthy relationship. We should never let a friend come between us and our spouse. A true Christian friend will wisely avoid intruding and recognize your need to maintain other relationships.

Christian Friends Give Mutual Edification

Proverbs 27:6

Wounds from a friend can be trusted ... [\(NIV\)](#)

True Christian friends will build each other up emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Friends like to be together simply because it *feels good*. We receive strength, encouragement, and love. We talk, we cry, we listen. But at times we also have to say the difficult things our dearest friend needs to hear. Yet, because of the shared trust and acceptance, we are the one person who can impact our friend's heart, for we know how to deliver the hard message with truth and grace. I believe this is what Proverbs 27:17 means when it says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

My hope is that these five traits will show you areas that may need a little work in your effort to build stronger friendships. But if you don't have lots of close friends, don't be too hard on yourself. Remember, true Christian friendships are rare treasures. They take time to nurture, but in the process we grow more Christlike.

Christian Friendships

[Tribute to Friendship Poem](#)

[Friendship Bible Verses](#)

[Jesus Our Friend Devotional](#)

Taking Catholic Truth to the Voting Booth

Summary

While the Catholic Church does not tell the faithful whom to vote for, she offers us strong guidance on the truth and what candidates should and should not stand for. We need to become informed on the major issues of our day, learn how our Catholic principals apply and make good prudential choices on the application of these principals in public policy.

Objective

This fall's presidential election offers a fairly stark contrast between the two major candidates on issues Catholics are obliged to consider. Candidates for other offices as well as various ballot initiatives may offer similar differences. We as Catholic voters need to understand what direction these candidates would take our country or locale. In September 2011, the US bishops re-released a 2007 document entitled Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship. The men of FATHERS Team should leave the meeting knowledgeable in the issues outlined in this document's introduction and be prepared to vote with fully formed consciences.

Bible Readings

1. Deuteronomy 4: 1,2 and 7

Now therefore, Israel, hear the statutes and ordinances I am teaching you to observe, that you may live, and may enter in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. In your observance of the commandments of the LORD, your God, which I am commanding you, you shall not add to what I command you nor subtract from it... For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the LORD, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him?

2. Psalm 15: 1-2

One who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord. Whoever walks blamelessly and does justice; who thinks the truth in his heart and slanders not with his tongue

3. James 1: 21

Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1918

There is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.

2. Paragraph 1923

Political authority must be exercised within the limits of the moral order and must guarantee the conditions for the exercise of freedom.

3. Paragraph 1894

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, neither the state nor any larger society should substitute itself for the initiative and responsibility of individuals and intermediary bodies.

Small Group Questions

1. Do you understand the basis of the Bishops' words on: life issues, religious liberty, the definition of marriage, the economy, immigration and war/violence?

2. How well have your consciences been formed in prior election cycles? Are you open to hearing the guidance of the US Bishops, and putting party affiliation lower on your priority list?
3. Are you willing to speak out loudly the principles outlined by the US Bishops?

Author(s)

John Fahrmeier and Jack Gauche

Included Resources

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops September 2011 statement

<http://usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship-document.cfm>

The moral and human challenges outlined in ... *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* remain pressing national issues. In particular, our Conference is focused on several current and fundamental problems, some involving opposition to intrinsic evils and others raising serious moral questions:

Continuing destruction of unborn children through abortion and other threats to the lives and dignity of others who are vulnerable, sick, or unwanted;

Renewed efforts to force Catholic ministries—in health care, education, and social services—to violate their consciences or stop serving those in need;

Intensifying efforts to redefine marriage and enact measures which undermine marriage as the permanent, faithful, and fruitful union of one man and one woman and a fundamental moral and social institution essential to the common good;

An economic crisis which has devastated lives and livelihoods, increasing national and global unemployment, poverty, and hunger; increasing deficits and debt and the duty to respond in ways which protect those who are poor and vulnerable as well as future generations;

The failure to repair a broken immigration system with comprehensive measures that promote true respect for law, protect the human rights and dignity of immigrants and refugees, recognize their contributions to our nation, keep families together, and advance the common good;

Wars, terror, and violence which raise serious moral questions on the use of force and its human and moral costs in a dangerous world, particularly the absence of justice, security, and peace in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East.

In this coming election and beyond, we urge leaders and all Catholics to share the message of faithful citizenship and to use this document in forming their own consciences, so we can act together to promote and protect human life and dignity, marriage and family, justice and peace in service to the common good. This kind of political responsibility is a requirement of our faith and our duty as citizens.

Membership in the Church Militant and the Catholic Spirit of Knighthood

Summary

Are you a member of the Church Militant wearing the armor of God? “The spirit of knighthood is available to all of us. It’s a vocation every Christian was made for. And it will never go out of style.” - Archbishop Charles Chaput

Objective

To obtain a better understanding of our mission as a member of the Church Militant wearing the armor of God and how do the principles of knighthood still apply today.

“Today the word *ecclesia militans* [Church Militant] is a bit out of fashion, but in reality we can always better understand that which is true, that which encapsulates truth. **We see how evil wants to rule the world and that it's necessary to enter the struggle against evil.** We see how it does this in so many very violent ways, with different forms of violence, but also posing as a force for good while destroying the moral foundations of society. St. Augustine said that all history is a struggle between two loves: love of oneself even to the extent of defying God, and love of God, to the extent of defying oneself, in martyrdom. We are in this fight and in this fight it is very important to have friends. And as for me, I'm surrounded by friends of the College of Cardinals: they are my friends and I feel at home, I feel confident in this company of great friends who are with me, all together with the Lord.” - **Pope Benedict XVI, May 21, 2012.**

“We belong to the Church Militant; and she is militant because on earth the powers of darkness are ever restless to encompass her destruction. Not only in the far-off centuries of the early Church, but down through the ages and in this our day, the enemies of God and Christian civilization make bold to attack the Creator’s supreme dominion and sacrosanct human rights.” - Pope Pius XII, October 14, 1953

Bible Readings

1. 2 Timothy 1:7

“For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control”

2. Revelation 12:17

“Then the dragon became angry with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God’s commandments and bear witness to Jesus.”

3. Ephesians 6:10-18

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,”

Membership in the Church Militant and the Catholic Spirit of Knighthood

4. Matthew 10:34-36

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes will be those of his own household."

5. 2 Timothy 2:3-4

"Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him"

6. 1 Maccabees 3:59-60

"It is better for us to die in battle than to witness the evils befalling our nation and our sanctuary. Whatever is willed in heaven will be done."

7. Romans 12:21

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

8. 2 Timothy 4:7

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2850

The last petition to our Father is also included in Jesus' prayer: "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one." It touches each of us personally, but it is always "we" who pray, in communion with the whole Church, for the deliverance of the whole human family. The Lord's Prayer continually opens us to the range of God's economy of salvation. Our interdependence in the drama of sin and death is turned into solidarity in the Body of Christ, the "communion of saints."

2. Paragraph 2851

In this petition, evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God. The devil (*dia-bolos*) is the one who "throws himself across" God's plan and his work of salvation accomplished in Christ

3. Paragraph 2852

"A murderer from the beginning, . . . a liar and the father of lies," Satan is "the deceiver of the whole world." Through him sin and death entered the world and by his definitive defeat all creation will be "freed from the corruption of sin and death." Now "we know that anyone born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one."

The Lord who has taken away your sin and pardoned your faults also protects you and keeps you from the wiles of your adversary the devil, so that the enemy, who is accustomed to leading into sin, may not surprise you. One who entrusts himself to God does not dread the devil. "If God is for us, who is against us?"

Small Group Questions

1. What does it mean to be a member of the Church Militant?
2. How can you fight the "good fight" in your everyday life?
3. Are you wearing the armor of God?
4. Do you consider yourself a modern day knight?

Recommended Resources

1. "The Catholic Spirit of Knighthood", by Archbishop Charles Chaput, 1/30/2010 (Included Below)
<http://www.archden.org/index.cfm/ID/4127>
2. "The Church Militant" (YouTube video – presenting group may wish to show this)

Membership in the Church Militant and the Catholic Spirit of Knighthood

3. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTYpZ4klg3Y&feature=related>
 “Pope lunches with friends, speaks of struggle against evil”, by Paul Zalonski 5/24/2012
<http://communio.stblogs.org/2012/05/pope-lunches-with-friends-spea.html>
4. “The Growing Persecution of the Catholic church and the Re-emergence of the Church Militant”,
 by Deacon Keith Fournier 5/24/2012:
http://www.catholic.org/international/international_story.php?id=46318
5. “The Templars Knights of Christ”, by Regine Pernoud

Accountability

1. Consider reading Ephesians 6:10-18 “armor of God”, before doing a task in which you might be tempted by the evil one
2. Share the Church Militant Youtube video with a friend or family member
3. Teach the St. Michael the Archangel “Defend us” prayer to a child or grandchild

Author(s)

Michael Copfer

Included Resources

1. The Catholic Spirit of Knighthood, by Archbishop Charles Chaput

I had the pleasure last week of spending time with Suzanne and Jim Broski. Like thousands of other Catholic married couples, the Broskis have a longtime love of their faith and devotion to the work of the Church. What makes their circumstances unique though is this: The Broskis are Colorado’s new state “co-councilors” for the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, better known as the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher. They had come to introduce themselves, and also to outline the Knights’ good work in easing the plight of Christians in the Holy Land.

Knighthood is an institution with very deep roots in the memory of the Church. Nearly 900 years ago, the great St. Bernard of Clairvaux described the ideal Christian knights as Godly men who *“shun every excess in clothing and food. They live as brothers in joyful and sober company (with) one heart and one soul. ... There is no distinction of persons among them, and deference is shown to merit rather than to noble blood. They rival one another in mutual consideration, and they carry one another’s burdens, thus fulfilling the law of Christ.”*

Bernard was anything but naïve. Writing in the early 12th century, he was well aware of the greed, vanity and violence that too often motivated Europe’s warrior class, even in the name of religious faith. Yet he wrote at a time when large Christian populations still existed in the Middle East and suffered under Muslim armed conquest, discrimination and persecution. In fact a trigger for the medieval Crusades—which began in Bernard’s lifetime—had been the harassment of Christian pilgrims to holy sites in what we now know as Israel and Palestine.

Many of the Crusaders who rallied to the liberation of the Holy Land did so out of genuine zeal for the Cross. Europe in the Middle Ages was a continent where Christian faith animated every aspect of daily life. But Bernard also knew that many others who left for Crusade had mixed or even ugly motives. In his great essay “In Praise of the New Knighthood” (c. 1136), he outlined the virtues that should shape the vocation of every truly “Christian” knight: humility, austerity, justice, obedience, unselfishness and a single-minded zeal for Jesus Christ in defending the Church, the poor and the weak.

Life today may seem very different from life in the 12th century, but human nature—our basic hopes, dreams, anxieties and sufferings—hasn’t really changed. The Christian vocation remains the same: to follow Jesus Christ faithfully, and in following Jesus, to defend Christ’s Church and serve her people zealously, unselfishly and with all our skill. As St. Ignatius Loyola wrote in his “Spiritual Exercises”—and remember that Ignatius himself was a former soldier—each of us must choose between two battle standards: the standard of Jesus Christ, humanity’s true King, or the standard of his impostor, the Prince of This World. There is no neutral ground.

Here's my point: The Church needs men and women of courage and Godliness today more than at any time in her history; and this is why the Catholic ideal of knighthood, with its demands of radical discipleship, is still vividly alive and still urgently needed. Whether one belongs to a wonderful fraternal service order like the Knights of Columbus or the Knights of St. Peter Claver; to an historic knightly order like the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher or the Knights of Malta; or to one of the Holy See's own pontifical knightly orders like the Knights of St. Gregory the Great; **the essence of knighthood is the same: *sacrificial service rooted in a living Catholic faith.***

That spirit of knighthood is available to all of us. It's a vocation every Christian was made for. And it will never go out of style.

2. "The Catholic Church is the Mystical Body of Christ", by Fr. William G. Most

Speaking of full membership in the Church, Pius XII, in his Encyclical on the Mystical Body, said it is the society of those who have been baptized, and who profess the faith of Christ, and who are governed by their bishops under the visible head, the Pope, the Bishop of Rome.

The Church came into being when Christ died on the Cross, but it was formally inaugurated on Pentecost, when He sent the Holy Spirit as He had promised. St. Paul speaks of all Christians as members of Christ, so that with Him, they form one Mystical Body (Cf. 1 Cor 12:12-31; Col 1:18; 2:18-20; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19; 4:13). St. Paul did not use the word Mystical. It was developed more recently to bring out the fact that this union is unique, there is no parallel to it. It is not the same as the union of a physical body, nor that of a business corporation.

The Church, the Mystical Body, exists on this earth, and is called the **Church militant**, because its members struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil. The **Church suffering** means the souls in Purgatory. The **Church triumphant** is the Church in heaven. The unity and cooperation of the members of the Church on earth, in Purgatory, in Heaven is also called the Communion of Saints. When St. Paul uses the word "Saints" in opening an Epistle, he does not mean they are morally perfect. He has in mind Hebrew *qadosh*, which means set aside for God, or coming under the covenant. Being such means of course they are called to moral perfection. But of course, not all have reached it in this world.

3. Ignatius Catholic Study Bible New Testament, page 353 commentary on Ephesians 6:10-18
"Armor of God"

Paul warns readers of the spiritual warfare that rages unseen in the Church. For Christ's kingdom does not spread free of opposition or enemies; rather, it is daily attacked by malevolent spirits under the command of Satan. Our first defense is the **armor of God**, i.e. the graces given to protect us in times of temptation. Our weaponry is both offensive (sword) and defensive (breastplate, shield, helmet, protective footwear), enabling us to ward off the powers of darkness and to guard ourselves from exposure to their tactics (2 Cor 6:7; 10:3-5; 1 Thess 5:8). Although the devil and his demons were defeated by Christ on the Cross (Col 2:15), they remain dangerous until he comes again to destroy them (1 Cor 15:24-25; Rev 20:10).

Paul alludes to Wis 5:17-20 and Is 59:17. Both passages depict Yahweh as a warrior suiting up for battle against the ungodly. The Church joins him in this holy war as believers are enlisted among the troops and equipped with his divine armory. This OT background suggests that Paul's imagery is more closely linked to Yahweh's spiritual armor than with the military gear of a Roman soldier.

To put on the armor of God is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Called to truth and righteousness, our Savior is our belt and our breastplate. Called the living Word of God, he is the sword who is sharp on both sides.

6:15 your feet...gospel of peace: An allusion to Is 52:7, Isaiah envisions Yahweh reigning on Mt. Zion after crushing his enemies and redeeming his people. News of his victory travels on foot as messengers bring "good tidings" of "peace" and "salvation" (Is 52:7) to the ends of the earth. Paul sees this prophecy unfolding in the lives of believers as they carry the gospel to the world. It is assumed that the steady advance of God's kingdom means the steady retreat of all opposing forces.

6:18 Pray at all times: A command closely linked with Paul's preceding instruction on spiritual warfare (CCC 2633, 2742). **It indicates that our perseverance in prayer must match the relentless persistence of the devil** (Lk 18:1; 1

Thes 5:17). **We can expect no truce between God's family and God's enemies before the Day of Judgment** (2 Pet 2:4).

How do you go from being a parent to a mentor with your adult children?

Summary

As our children get older, our interaction with them changes. No longer can our values and ideas be imprinted on them by virtue of being the parent. As children age, they bring their own mindsets to the family relationship, life in general and beyond. This can be especially difficult if their values, ideas and mores tend to be different, sometimes substantially different than yours. It may be something as simple as moving out and leaving the area or as significant as having members of the opposite sex other than moving in with the now adult child, to variation in life styles.

Objective

Typically, as a child moves into adulthood, their ideas and ways of doing things can and usually are substantially different than yours. As our children age, like we age, they change, like we change. It seems that a parent often moves more from the guiding hand on the shoulder to the dispenser of wisdom and information as to how the world really works. All too often, in trying to understand the adult child's mentality and life, there can be alienation between the parent and the offspring. It is almost as if there is resentment for bringing up your values.

The challenge is how to still be a parent, with all of our values, and still be a mentor, parent and sometimes even a friend to your child when their values are different, sometimes dramatically different than yours. As parents, we have developed our value system over a period of time, and our now grown children, especially those out of college are starting to develop theirs.

There is an old joke about a young man talking about his father and remarking to a friend that when he was in high school, he thought his father might have been dumber than a box of rocks, but when the young man graduated from college, he was amazed at how much his father had learned. There may be a lot of truth in that old "saw". From the sometimes rebellious years of high school, to the realization that a child has a vast amount of unlearned information, this seems like a good time to focus on what your values are. The most important thing is to let your adult child know that you are there for them and although you may disagree with some of the things they do, you are always the parent.

Bible Readings

1. Tobit 4: 5-6

Through all the days my son, keep the LORD in mind, and suppress every desire to sin or to break his commandments. Perform good works all the days of your life, and do not tread the paths of wrong doing. For if you are steadfast in your service, your good works will bring success, not only to you, but also to those who live uprightly.

2. Exodus 20: 12

Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land the LORD your God is giving you

3. Colossians 3: 20-21

How do you go from being a parent to a mentor with your adult children?

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord.^p Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged.^q

4. Ephesians 6: 1- 4

Children, obey your parents [in the Lord], for this is right.^a “Honor your father and mother.”^b This is the first commandment with a promise, “that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on earth.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord.^c

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2199

The fourth commandment is addressed expressly to children in their relationship to their father and mother, because this relationship is the most universal. It likewise concerns the ties of kinship between members of the extended family. It requires honor, affection, and gratitude toward elders and ancestors. Finally, it extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administer or govern it.

This commandment includes and presupposes the duties of parents, instructors, teachers, leaders, magistrates, those who govern, all who exercise authority over others or over a community of persons.

2. Paragraph 2200

Observing the fourth commandment brings its reward: “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.”⁸ Respecting this commandment provides, along with spiritual fruits, temporal fruits of peace and prosperity. Conversely, failure to observe it brings great harm to communities and to individuals. (2304)

3. Paragraph 2208

The family should live in such a way that its members learn to care and take responsibility for the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped, and the poor. There are many families who are at times incapable of providing this help. It devolves then on other persons, other families, and, in a subsidiary way, society to provide for their needs: “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”¹²

Small Group Questions

1. Do you think that your father valued your opinion as you became older?
2. Do you model the type of behavior that you would like your children to have as they become older
3. Do you have any family members that mentored you as you aged
4. If your father is alive, how is your relation with him?
5. Could you talk to your father when you were young? How about now?
6. What do you wish you knew when you were younger that you know now? Can you give your children that information?

Recommended Resources

1. Live and Learn and Pass It On, H. Jackson Brown, People share what they have discovered about life, love and the world

How do you go from being a parent to a mentor with your adult children?

2. Life's Little Instruction Book, H. Jackson Brown, 500+ suggestions, observations and reminders on how to live a happy and rewarding life.

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start to talk to your child about life and responsibilities

Author(s)

Jack Gauche & Bob Considine

Included Resources

Perhaps to be used as a lead in to group sharing exercise

Cat's in the Cradle by Harry Chapin (1942-1981), 1974 Album *Verities and Balderdash*

My child arrived just the other day
He came to the world in the usual way
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay
He learned to walk while I was away
And he was talkin' 'fore I knew it, and as he grew
He'd say "I'm gonna be like you dad
You know I'm gonna be like you"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon
When you comin' home dad?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

My son turned ten just the other day
He said, "Thanks for the ball, Dad, come on let's play
Can you teach me to throw", I said "Not today
I got a lot to do", he said, "That's ok"
And he walked away but his smile never dimmed
And said, "I'm gonna be like him, yeah
You know I'm gonna be like him"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon
When you comin' home son?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

Well, he came home from college just the other day
So much like a man I just had to say
"Son, I'm proud of you, can you sit for a while?"
He shook his head and said with a smile
"What I'd really like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys
See you later, can I have them please?"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon
When you comin' home son?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

How do you go from being a parent to a mentor with your adult children?

I've long since retired, my son's moved away
I called him up just the other day
I said, "I'd like to see you if you don't mind"
He said, "I'd love to, Dad, if I can find the time
You see my new job's a hassle and kids have the flu
But it's sure nice talking to you, Dad
It's been sure nice talking to you"

And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me
He'd grown up just like me
My boy was just like me

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon
When you comin' home son?
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son
You know we'll have a good time then

I Didn't Know I Married My In-Laws, Too

Summary

Who did you really marry? At the altar, the real question might be “Do you take this woman, her parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, friends and co-workers”? What this points out then when we marry, our background and family of origin can play a significant role in the forming of the family unit. As a married couple we are called to leave our families and “become one with each other” but this is not always so easy to do.

Objective

We really are who we are. We are made up of many things that have taken place in our lives. The same is true for our wives. We are all part of our family of origin, and we bring that family of origin into our marriage and we perceive married life.

What was it like in my family growing up? Were my parents together, or divorced? Did one of my parents stay home and be the full time care giver? Did my mother work out of the house? How much time was spent with my family and was I involved or on the sidelines? Look at parenting styles, and how much they affect you and how you are raising your children. Look also at your parent's relationships and how you may or may not mirror the interactions your parents as spouses had. The Church calls us to be exclusively for each other, but is rather silent on how this is accomplished.

Now think, your wife has the same issues. Both your wife's and your family of origin influence you even as an adult today. How your parents and your in-laws interacted with each other, greatly affects how you and your wife also interact. For some, going back is a pleasant experience, for others, perhaps not necessarily so.

As a husband, you have married your in-laws to a certain extent. How your wife models her parents, and how she interacted with her siblings certainly will have a great impact on her relationship with you and your family. It is also important to remember that your wife has also married your parents, siblings etc. It is a two way street.

In the Bible readings and in the excerpts from the Catholic Catechism, we can see that as a married couple, we called to leave those we knew and lived with behind and move forward to creating our own family unit.

Bible Readings

1. Genesis 24

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body

2. Matthew 19:4-6

He said in reply, “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall

become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate

3. 1 Corinthians 7: 3-5

The husband should fulfill his duty toward his wife, and likewise the wife toward her husband. A wife does not have authority over her own body, but rather her husband, and similarly a husband does not have authority over his own body, but rather his wife. Do not deprive each other, except perhaps by mutual consent for a time, to be free for prayer, but then return to one another,

4. Ephesians 5: 21-33

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husband as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife, just as Christ is head of the church, himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So (also) husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh, but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

"For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh"

This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church. In any case, each should love his wife as himself and the wife should respect her husband.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 372

Man and woman were made "for each other" - not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be "helpmate" to the other, for they are equal as persons ("bone of my bones. . .") and complementary as masculine and feminine. In marriage God unites them in such a way that, by forming "one flesh",²⁴⁵ they can transmit human life: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."²⁴⁶ By transmitting human life to their descendants, man and woman as spouses and parents cooperate in a unique way in the Creator's work.²⁴⁷

2. Paragraph 2333

Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. Physical, moral, and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out.

3. Paragraph 2202

A man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children, form a family. This institution is prior to any recognition by public authority, which has an obligation to recognize it. It should be considered the normal reference point by which the different forms of family relationship are to be evaluated.

4. Paragraph 2364

The married couple forms "the intimate partnership of life and love established by the Creator and governed by his laws; it is rooted in the conjugal covenant, that is, in their irrevocable personal consent."¹⁴⁷ Both give themselves definitively and totally to one another. They are no longer two; from now on they form one flesh. The covenant they freely contracted imposes on the spouses the obligation to preserve it as unique and indissoluble.¹⁴⁸ "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."¹⁴⁹

Small Group Questions

1. Which of us has had the most difficulty separating from our family and friends?
2. What values and traditions in your and your wife's family do you most enjoy and most dislike?
3. In what ways do friends and family challenge our unity as a married couple and a family unit?
4. Where am I in the birth order in my family and where was my wife?
5. How is your family life the same as your family growing up and how is it different?
6. Do you discipline the same as you were disciplined growing up?
7. When you have troubles or questions about your marriage, who do you turn to?

Recommended Resources

1. *Fighting for your Marriage*, Markham, Stanley, and Blumberg, 1994
2. Marriage Preparation, Archdiocese of Cincinnati, used with permission

Accountability

1. Marriage is a lot like a ski race. You are asked to race down a hill, curving and turning between the boundaries of the poles. It takes discipline and skill to navigate the course. You simply cannot spontaneously or without preparation navigate the course. Together you are creating a new pattern of poles and ski path. It is unique to your own special blending of family and personality. When it is done well and with forethought, it is exhilarating and fulfilling.

Author(s)

Jack Gauche

Included Resources

- <http://foryourmarriage.org/dating-engaged/marriage-readiness/family-of-origin>

The term "**Family of Origin**" refers to the **family** that you grew up in – your parents and siblings. It may also include a grandparent, other relative, or divorced ...

Knowing God's Will

Summary

Christ taught us that knowing God's will and living in obedience to that will is the key to it all! God is the potter; we are the clay. God keeps us spinning on His potter's wheel, shaping and reshaping us as He bathes our lives in tears to make us more Christ-like so He can use us for His will. Surrender daily. Keep your clay moist through daily prayer - prayer that's in accordance to His will.

Objective

Our job, our purpose is to understand and live in God's will and not be selective when times get tough.

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 7:21

Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

2. Matthew 12:50

For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother and sister and mother.

3. Romans 12:2

Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2882

Our Father "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." He "is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish." His commandment is "that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." This commandment summarizes all the others and expresses his entire will.

2. Paragraph 2825

"Although he was a Son, [Jesus] learned obedience through what he suffered." How much more reason have we sinful creatures to learn obedience - we who in him have become children of adoption. We ask our Father to unite our will to his Son's, in order to fulfill his will, his plan of salvation for the life of the world. We are radically incapable of this, but united with Jesus and with the power of his Holy Spirit, we can surrender our will to him and decide to choose what his Son has always chosen: to do what is pleasing to the Father.

In committing ourselves to [Christ], we can become one spirit with him, and thereby accomplish his will, in such wise that it will be perfect on earth as it is in heaven.

Consider how Jesus Christ teaches us to be humble, by making us see that our virtue does not depend on our work alone but on grace from on high. He commands each of the faithful who prays to do so universally, for the whole world. For he did not say "thy will be done in me or in us," but "on earth," the whole earth, so that error may be banished from it, truth take root in it, all vice be destroyed on it, virtue flourish on it, and earth no longer differ from heaven.

3. Paragraph 2826

By prayer we can discern "what is the will of God" and obtain the endurance to do it. Jesus teaches us that one enters the kingdom of heaven not by speaking words, but by doing "the will of my Father in heaven."

4. Paragraph 2827

"If anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him." Such is the power of the Church's prayer in the name of her Lord, above all in the Eucharist. Her prayer is also a communion of intercession with the all-holy Mother of God and all the saints who have been pleasing to the Lord because they willed his will alone:

It would not be inconsistent with the truth to understand the words, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," to mean: "in the Church as in our Lord Jesus Christ himself"; or "in the Bride who has been betrothed, just as in the Bridegroom who has accomplished the will of the Father."

Small Group Questions

1. Think about a situation you have been in lately where you did not live God's will. Discuss that situation and what caused you to make the choice you made.
2. What action can you take the next time so the outcome is different?
3. At this point in your life, what level of commitment do you have to living God's will and not your will?

Recommended Resources

1. from The Integrated Catholic Life - <http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/2011/12/deacon-bickerstaff-five-essentials-for-discovering-and-living-gods-plan/>
2. Living Your Strengths: Discover Your God-Given Talents and Inspire Your Community (Catholic Edition) [Hardcover] by [Albert L. Winseman](#)
3. Finding God's Will for You [Paperback] by [St. Francis de Sales](#) (Author)

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start thinking of various ways we can let go of some of our selfish ways as we strive to live closer to God's will for our life.
2. Consider an action you will take this week to better understand God's will and commit to it. Report to the small group your observations and progress during the next meeting.

Author(s)

Reid Rooney - Previous Author(s): Steve Green / Graham Galloway

Included Resources

1. From The Integrated Catholic Life - Five Essentials for Discovering and Living God's Will

Let's face it – not all of us have a prophet like Nathan living in our home and we are not likely to be visited by an Archangel. So how are we to discover God's plan for us? I think too many of us look for a great sign and fail to hear the quiet voice of God when He speaks to us in our hearts and through others. So here are what I believe are five essentials for discovering and living God's Will:

Live in Christ's Friendship – We Catholics refer to this as being in a state of grace. That is, live the sacramental life and, particularly, seek forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation whenever you become aware of committing a grave sin. Mortal sin particularly deafens our spiritual hearing.

Practice Humility and Surrender to the Lord – We are all inclined to be prideful. If we think we already have all the answers, we won't be open to new ones, so get into the habit of practicing humility daily. Humbly surrender your will to the Lord.

Pray Daily – Do we really love God above all else? Then we should be praying before and above all else. That's what you do when you love someone; you spend time in their company. Prayer is spending time with God. In prayer, we must ask God to reveal His Will to us.

Knowing God's Will

Be Aware and Listen – Do you normally limit your prayer to speaking to God? If so, you need to set aside time during and after your prayer to listen. Trust Jesus. He said, “Seek and you will find, ask and you will receive, knock and the door will be opened.” Have faith that God will answer and you will discover that answer – one way or the other.

Decide to Act – The desire to live God’s Will is not the same as the decision to live God’s Will. The former is a feeling; the latter is an act of human will. This is not always easy and it can sometimes be painful, but you can believe that God has only the good for you in His answer. We cannot always see very far down the road. We won’t always understand the specific purpose and end, beyond our own salvation, for our actions and decisions that God has in His Plan of Divine Providence for us. It is only ours to trust and act.

2. “The less self-willed we are, the easier it will be to us to follow God’s will.”

Letter by [St. Francis de Sales](#)

We must recollect that there is no vocation without its wearinesses, its bitternesses, and its trials; and moreover (except in the case of those who are wholly resigned to the will of God,) each one would willingly change his condition with that of others. Those who are Ministers, would fain be otherwise. They who are married, would they were not. They who are not, would they were. From whence proceeds this general discontentedness, if it be not a certain rebellion against constraint, and an evil spirit in us that makes each one think another’s condition better than his own?

But it is all one; and whosoever is not entirely resigned, but keeps on turning this way and that, never will find peace. When a person has a fever, he finds no place comfortable; he has not remained in one bed a quarter of an hour, before he wishes to be in another. It is not the bed which is in fault, but the fever, which torments him everywhere. And so a person who has not the fever of self-will, is contented everywhere and in all things, provided God be glorified. He cares not in what capacity God employs him, provided he can do therein His Divine will.

But this is not all. We must not only do the will of God, but to be really devout, we must do it cheerfully, nay, joyfully. If I were not a Bishop, perhaps, knowing what I now do, I might wish not to be one. But being one, not only am I obliged to do all that this difficult vocation requires, but I must do it joyfully, and make it agreeable to myself to do it. This is what St. Paul means when he says, “Let every man in the vocation in which he is called, therein abide with God.”¹

We cannot bear the crosses of others, but each one must bear his own; and that we may each bear our own, our Lord would that each should renounce himself; that is to say, his own will. “I wish this or that” I should be better here or there.” These are temptations. Our Lord knows best what is best for each one of us; let us do what He wills, and remain where He has placed us.

But you have asked me to give you a few practical rules for your guidance. Besides all I have told you above, you should, First, meditate every day, either in the morning or before dinner or supper, and especially on the Life and Death of our Lord, and you can make use of any book that may assist you. Your meditation should never last above half-an-hour; at the end of each always add a consideration of the obedience which our Lord exercised towards God His Father: for you will see that all He did was done in obedience to the will of God; and considering this will rouse you more earnestly to strive to learn His will yourself. Secondly, before you do or prepare to do any of those duties of your calling which are apt to irritate you, think of the saints of old, who joyfully endured great and grievous things,—some suffering martyrdom, some dishonor in this world; some binding up ulcers and fearful sores; some banishing themselves into the desert; some working among slaves in the galleys: and each and all to do something pleasing in the sight of God. And what are we called upon to do, approaching to such trials as these?

Thirdly, Often think that the real value of whatever we do, is proportioned by the conformity with which we do it to the will of God. If in merely eating or drinking I do it *because* it is the will of God that I should, I am doing what is more agreeable to Him, than if I were to do what should even cost me my life, without any such Divine intention.

Fourthly, I would advise you often during the day, beseech God that He would inspire you with a real love of your vocation, and that you should say, like St. Paul, when he was converted, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”² Wouldest Thou that I should serve Thee in the lowest office in Thy house? I will reckon myself here,

too blest. Provided that I serve Thee, I care not in what capacity.” And coming more particularly to what is vexing you, say, “Wouldest Thou that I should do such-and-such a thing? Alas! O Lord, though I am not worthy, willingly will I do it.” and by these means you may greatly humble yourself; and oh, what a treasure you will obtain! Far, far greater, doubtless, than you can ever estimate!

Fifthly, I would wish that you should consider how many saints have been in your position of life and vocation, and how they all accommodated themselves to it with great meekness and resignation; as many in the Old Testament as in the New,—Sara, and Rebecca, and Elizabeth, and the holy Anna, and St. Paul, and hundreds of others; and let their example encourage you. We must love what God loves; and if He loves our vocation, let us love it also; and let us not amuse ourselves, by placing ourselves in the position of others. Let us diligently do our business. For each his own cross is not too much. Gently mingle the office of Martha with that of Mary, diligently doing the duties of your calling, often recollecting yourself, and placing yourself in spirit at the foot of the Cross, and saying, “My Lord, whether I run, or whether I stand still, or whatever I do, I am Thine, and Thou art mine. Thou art my first Love, my Spouse, and all that I do, it is for Thee, whatsoever it be.”

Further, every evening examine yourself, and throughout the day constantly raise ejaculatory prayers to God. I recommend, for your reading, the “Spiritual Combat.” Communicate, if possible, every week, and regularly attend the services of the Church on Sundays and Festivals. Remember also what I have often told you,—be just to yourself in the devoted life you are leading; I mean, let others, and especially those of your own family, see its blessed effects in yourself, and be led to honor it accordingly. We must always be careful not to make our devotion annoying to others. What we cannot do without annoyance, especially to those placed over us, we should leave undone: and believe me this spiritual self-denial and privation, so far from being displeasing to God, will be accepted by Him as such, and turn to your own profit. Deny yourself willingly; and in proportion as you are hindered from doing the good you desire, strive so much the more zealously to do what you do not desire. Perhaps it is difficult for you to resign yourself patiently and gladly to these privations, but in doing so, you will gain for yourself real benefit. In all commit your cares and trials, and contradictions, and whatever befalls you to God, comforting yourself in the thought, that He blesses those who are holy, or those who are striving to become so. Keep your heart ready to bear every sort of cross and disappointment with resignation, for the sake of Him Who has borne so much for us: and may He fill thy heart and be thy guide through life!

Strategies for Keeping Your Kids or Grandkids Catholic

Summary

A child's faith trajectory is fairly established by the time they reach 14 years of age. Young adults are considered one of the most un-churched generations. The challenge is to help young people experience Catholicism as fulfilling their spiritual hunger. What can we do to help our children and grandchildren nurture and remain active in their faith?

Objective

Children tend to follow the faith of their parents. Roman Catholic families have traditionally had a passive approach to educating their children about the Catholic faith, delegating the responsibility of teaching our faith to others (teachers, schools, priests, nuns, etc.). As fathers, we have a critical role in establishing the importance of faith in our families. Our children look to us for guidance. We have a narrow window of time to influence their beliefs and establish the faith as an important part of their lives. The powerful memories that we give our kids will sustain them and give them roots, when temptations of the world challenge them.

Bible Readings

1. Proverbs 22:6

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

2. Ephesians 6:4

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

3. Matthew 19:13-14

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people; but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2223

"Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by *creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for *education in the virtues*. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones." Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them."

2. Paragraph 2228

"Parents' respect and affection are expressed by the care and attention they devote to bringing up their young children and *providing for their physical and spiritual needs*. As the children grow up, the same respect and devotion lead parents to educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom."

Small Group Questions

1. What type of spiritual example are you setting for your children?

Strategies for Keeping Your Kids or Grandkids Catholic

2. Do you pray with your kids?
3. What events/things do you do with your kids to put faith in action?
4. Have you ever read "YOUCAT" or done a Bible study with your kids?

Recommended Resources

3. "8 Strategies for Keeping Your Kids Catholic", by Robert McCarty, 2008 Liguori Publications (Most of pamphlet included below)
4. Strong Catholic Families, Strong Catholic Youth by Michael Theisen (National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry):
<http://www.diojeffcity.org/Ministries/ChristianEd/ReligiousEd/Strong%20Catholic%20Families/A2FamilyFaithResourceBookBWrevised.pdf>
5. "Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers", by Christian Smith and Melina Lundquist Denton, 2009
6. "Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults", by Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, 2009

Accountability

1. Set a positive image and be your child's spiritual example.
2. Review the 8 strategies with your wife and look for ways to be engaged with your kids regarding putting the faith in action.
3. Conversation starters about faith and religion you can use with you kids:
 - a. Where do you most experience the presence of God?
 - b. Where or when do you pray best?
 - c. What characteristics of Jesus are you most attracted to?
 - d. What is the best part of belonging to our parish?
 - e. What is the one thing you would change about our parish?
 - f. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is going to Mass on Sunday for you? What makes it that number?
 - g. Have you ever had an experience where your faith was really tested?
 - h. Have you ever had an experience where your faith has really helped you?
 - i. Who do you consider to be a genuine person of faith?
 - j. What church teaching most confuses you?
 - k. How is your faith different now from when you were younger?
 - l. What experiences, places, or persons have really fostered your growth in faith?

Author(s)

Michael Copfer and Ken Mai

Included Resources

8 Strategies for Keeping Your Kids Catholic, by Robert McCarty, 2008 Liguori Publications

1. Practice and Participate:

Contrary to popular opinion, the Number 1 influence in the faith life of young people is the faith life of their parents. Young people really do mirror the faith life of their parents, so the way we practice our religion is very important. Our participation in Sunday Mass and other special liturgical celebrations, as well as our active involvement in the life of the parish, shows our children that our religion is a significant part of our

lives. In addition to Mass attendance, we can participate in retreats, Bible study groups, church organizations and ministries, or adult catechesis sessions.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, invite them to go with you – even if it's just on a special holy day or anniversary. They may decline, but your invitation will remind them that Mass is a meaningful part of your life and that you wish to share your faith with them.

2. Model Our Faith:

In addition to worshiping with our children, we can have a great impact on the faith of young people when our faith guides our daily routines and interactions. Faith should influence our lifestyle choices, use of time, how we handle conflicts, the relationships we form, and even how we handle work issues. It may sound trite, but the two most obvious challenges to the practice of faith in real life are how adults drive their cars and how they behave at sports events! Our spontaneous reactions in emotional situations can reveal to others whether our faith and values influence our behavior.

So we might ask ourselves: Do we pray at home in the evening? Before family meals? In restaurants? Do we remember people who are less fortunate in our prayers? Do we pray for our children's intentions? For their friends? Do we model forgiveness and reconciliation in our lives by admitting when we are wrong and forgiving others who hurt us? How do we handle crises such as death, divorce and illnesses? Does our faith impact how we celebrate Christmas, Easter, or other holy days? Do we volunteer our time and talent to ant service organizations or civic programs? All of these situations are part of life. Our young people watch to see if faith makes sense to us, if faith works for us. They are looking for a faith that provides meaning in all areas of their life, not just on Sundays.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass on Sunday, model your Catholicism at all times and in all settings.

3. Include Young Adults:

What a blessing it would be if all our young people were greeted by name when they walked through the church doors! We begin to meet their hunger for connection by welcoming them on Sunday and fostering their participation in the faith community. A sense of belonging is a very strong bond.

These experiences begin with the parish young adult ministry program. Young adults need to gather with their peers right in their own church. They need opportunities to build community with their peers, to feel connected with other faith-filled persons, and to interact with caring, believing adults. Parents should encourage their young adult's participation in appropriate parish activities. Parishes must be intentional in including young adults in their liturgical, pastoral, and leadership ministries. We can't wait until young people ask or volunteer: we must actively invite them into responsible participation in the life, work and mission of the faith community.

Of course, the experience of community goes beyond the local Church. Gathering with other young adults through national groups such as Theology on Tap or at diocesan or international events like World Youth Day will give them a sense of belonging to something bigger. One of the main benefits of these events is that participants connect with their peers from other regions and cultures. It helps bring home the truth that they are part of an important and inclusive global community.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, help them experience their membership in the greater Catholic family. Encourage them to be involved in liturgical ministries and invite them to be leaders in parish programs.

4. Doing Faith:

One of the most important characteristics of the spirituality of young adults is their need to "do faith." Actions inspired by faith are powerful experiences. Perhaps the most profound experience of doing faith is involvement in justice and service projects. Serving in soup kitchens, participating in a work camp, working

in a community shelter program or emergency-outreach center, tutoring children, or participating in public events for justice can have a significant impact on the faith of young adults and respond to their hunger for justice.

Similarly, young people “do faith” when they participate in retreats, pilgrimages, or public Stations of the Cross. These can be moving experiences of faith in action, too. All of these experiences are even more powerful when young adults and their parents participate in events together.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, encourage them to “do faith” through their participation in service to the community, in parish ministries and in special liturgical events.

5. Learning Opportunities:

Young adults do need to know the traditions, creed, teachings and stories of our faith community. They need to know the story of Jesus and the gospel message. Many are genuinely interested in reading and understanding Scripture. They need to know what it means to be Catholic, and they want to learn how to participate in the rituals and worship of the Church. The faith community needs to be a safe place where young adults can bring their questions and where they can search with others for answers that make sense, meet their needs and provide meaning and purpose in their lives.

Further, our young people need to know about that unique dimension of our faith often described as our Catholic “imagination.” Catholics “see” the world differently. Through our sacramental lens, we encounter a world filled with God’s presence. Our traditional practices, our use of images, our symbols, and our rituals provide an avenue to an encounter with an imminent, loving God.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, find opportunities for them to learn more about their faith through Bible study, faith-sharing groups, or other diocesan programs-and offer to go with them!

6. Prayer Skills:

Young adults need both personal and communal experiences of prayer. They can be creative and enthusiastic when they are invited to compose original prayers or spiritual poems that incorporate their favorite music and symbols. Often they are very open to traditional contemplative Catholic approaches to prayer, such as the Ignatian exercises, which enable them to connect with Spirit within.

They should also be encouraged to participate with the faith community in worship experiences, sharing in the Catholic community’s understanding of God, our traditions, our unique rituals and our ways of prayer. This “both/and” approach to the personal and communal dimension fosters their experience of prayer as the outpouring of their relationship with God and deepens their faith.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, talk with them about personal prayer and the value of praying together at Mass.

7. Faith Sharing:

As young adults search for a personal understanding of God, they must be able and encouraged to look for God’s presence in their lived experiences. Young adults should be assisted in naming their experience of a God who is active and present in their lives. God does not wait to be invited into the lives of young people. God takes the initiative and is present, but God waits to be identified or named. Many young adults need language to help them understand and express their experiences of God.

Parents and other caring, faith-filled adults can assist young adults in identifying God’s presence in their joys and sorrows, in their hopes and dreams and in their day-to-day lives. Of course, this requires that we have the language to name the presence of God in our own lives. We can ask our young adults where they experience God, where they pray best, where they feel joy and sorrow, for God is present there. And we can share our own experiences.

This faith sharing is a very important task because young people will never understand the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures until they can read the Scriptures of their own lives. Therein young adults experience the God

who is always active and present. And we should be open to having our own understanding of God challenged and perhaps deepened by our young adults' experience of God.

If you want young adults to go to Mass, ask them questions about their faith life.

8. Compelling Adventure:

At the heart of their spiritual hunger is the desire of young adults for a compelling vision of life that provides a genuine sense of meaning and purpose—a noble adventure worthy of their commitment. The Catholic Church inherited the noble adventure and compelling mission of Jesus Christ—to build the reign of God—to make the world better for all people.

Participation in this spiritual adventure requires a community of companions also committed to this mission—that is, the Church. There is also a need to celebrate this adventure regularly—that is, at Mass. At its best, liturgy is a spiritual drama that tells the story of Jesus and connects that story with building the reign here and now.

If you want your young adults to go to Mass, call them to a compelling adventure worthy of their lives.

How to talk about and manage money within your family

Summary

Money issues can drive a wedge between husband and spouse and can be a source of conflict among siblings, and between parents and children. How we deal with money often sets the stage for relationships and how we live our lives.

Objective

Each man should leave the meeting with a better appreciation of the role of money in his life, how it can be better managed with his spouse with proper communication and prioritization, and how broader family relationships can be affected by money issues.

Bible Readings

1. 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Indeed, religion with contentment is a great gain.

For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it.

If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that.

Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and into a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is the root of all evils, and some people in their desire for it have strayed from the faith and have pierced themselves with many pains.

2. Matthew 25:14-30

"It will be as when a man who was going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them.

To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one--to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money.

After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them.

The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.'

(Then) the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.'

Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.' His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten.

For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraphs 2402-2406

How to talk about and manage money within your family

In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labor, and enjoy their fruits. The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race. However, the earth is divided up among men to assure the security of their lives, endangered by poverty and threatened by violence. The appropriation of property is legitimate for guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of persons and for helping each of them to meet his basic needs and the needs of those in his charge. It should allow for a natural solidarity to develop between men.

The *right to private property*, acquired or received in a just way, does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of mankind. The *universal destination of goods* remains primordial, even if the promotion of the common good requires respect for the right to private property and its exercise.

"In his use of things man should regard the external goods he legitimately owns not merely as exclusive to himself but common to others also, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as himself." The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefits to others, first of all his

Goods of production - material or immaterial - such as land, factories, practical or artistic skills, oblige their possessors to employ them in ways that will benefit the greatest number. Those who hold goods for use and consumption should use them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, for the sick and the poor.

Political authority has the right and duty to regulate the legitimate exercise of the right to ownership for the sake of the common good.

2. Paragraph 2429

Everyone has the *right of economic initiative*; everyone should make legitimate use of his talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all and to harvest the just fruits of his labor. He should seek to observe regulations issued by legitimate authority for the sake of the common good.

Small Group Questions

1. Have you openly discussed and agreed with your spouse about the management of money?
2. Have you agreed to a proper balance of spending, saving, giving, indebtedness, investment risk-taking and other factors?
3. How much is "keeping up with the Jones" operative in your family?
4. How do your siblings or grown children handle their money? Do differences here contribute to tension within your families?

Included Resources

1. How to Stop Fighting With Your Spouse About Money

<http://www.getrichslowly.org/blog/2008/01/23/how-to-stop-fighting-with-your-spouse-about-money/>

Many sources cite money as the number one cause of marital strife. Some of you probably know this from first-hand experience. I can relate, too. My wife and I are very close, but money has always been a touchy subject, and unfortunately has led to a more than a few "disagreements".

Last year, we decided to [get control of our money](#) instead of allowing our money to control us. I did extensive reading and research, and we began to [put some changes into place](#). Since then, we've learned what works for us and what doesn't. We are not experts, but I will say this: since we began this journey, we haven't once fought over our money.

Here are seven actions you can take today to stop fighting with your spouse about money. They worked for us, and they'll probably work for you.

Be a team: There is no "I" in "Team"

Between talking with people and listening to callers on [The Dave Ramsey Show](#), I'm surprised by the number of married people who talk about their finances and converse as if their spouse doesn't even exist: "When I do the budget", "When I pay the bills", "I am working two jobs to provide extra income", "I...I...I".

How to talk about and manage money within your family

Shouldn't they be saying "We"? With so many "I"s everywhere, it's no wonder couples are fighting — they aren't communicating! The best way to manage your finances is *together*. Create your financial plan together, do the bills together, review your net worth together. If you do anything related to your finances, make sure your spouse is involved *and* has a say so in the decision process.

Develop a budget — together!

From personal experience, one cause of fights (or "fussing", as we call it in the South) is one spouse spending what the other spouse considers too much money. This is generally a problem when the couple is already fairly tight on finances, or when one spouse is far more frugal than the other.

To resolve this issue, [create a budget](#) together. It's not important how you do it or what method you use, but that you *create the budget together*. If both spouses don't have input in the budget, they won't "have any skin in the game". Both should provide input on the numbers and be part of the process.

Hold weekly budget review meetings

If one spouse is doing all of the finances, it's very difficult for the other spouse to know the current financial state. Even with a budget, a lack of communication can make it difficult to know how much is left in the "grocery category" or the "entertainment category".

To solve this problem, pick one night of the week to review your finances. Pick a time when you and your spouse can devote 15-30 minutes without interruption. For us, this is after our younger children are in bed. I generally update our finances daily, but I always make sure the budget is updated before our meeting.

I print a copy of the budget that shows the amount we allocated for each category and how much we have remaining. We review each category and discuss the amounts remaining and any expected expenditures for the week. If we are short in one area and over in another, we move the money around. If we are just short, we either decide to cut back and not spend, or we pull the funds from the emergency fund.

Review your finances frequently. Communicate. You'll be amazed at the difference a little communication makes.

Establish an [emergency fund](#)

The most important thing you can do to keep your finances under control — and to avoid using credit cards and going into debt — is to establish an emergency fund. Nothing stresses a couple more than running out of money before all the bills are paid. Even worse is having the air conditioner or the car break down without money to get it fixed.

Establish a \$1000-\$2000 emergency fund and put it in a [high-interest savings account](#). The emergency fund will cover those unexpected expenses. The key is that each spouse must agree to not touch these funds without the other's agreement. This keeps the emergency fund from being used to buy big-screen TVs or designer pocket books.

It's okay to make mistakes

Being the detailed geeky type that I am, when we first started budgeting, I wanted the budget to be perfect. I wanted us to follow it perfectly. While discussing our finances one night, I found that my wife hated the budgeting process. After some discussion, I realized it wasn't the budgeting process she hated, but how I handled it.

The budget isn't going to be perfect. It should get better as you do it more, but it will never be perfect. That's okay. If you are off, just move the money around. If you overspend, tap the emergency fund — just be sure to put the money back. You'll find that the longer you follow a budget, the easier and more accurate it becomes.

Like everything else, it's a journey. If you're like us, just having a budget will be a *huge* leap in the right direction.

Agree to hold each other accountable

After we agree on the budget for the upcoming month, my wife and I do a pinky shake. Is this a little silly? Sure, but it works for us. Every time I am in the store and see some new shiny electronic gadget I want, that pinky shake reminds me of the commitment I made. That little shake makes me question if I need the item or not. I can't tell you how many times I've walked out of a store empty-handed because of that little shake.

The point is to think of something both of you can do to commit to each other. That little reminder is worth its weight in gold.

[Get out of debt](#)

Debt is a dark cloud that follows you constantly. Debt puts pressure on your finances, and ultimately on your marriage. Getting out of debt will give you financial freedom and peace of mind. If you are in debt, stop getting further in debt right now. If you have credit cards, shred them. Is your car payment way too high? Sell it and buy something you can afford. Is your mortgage beyond your means? Sell the house.

Once you have stopped going further into debt, begin aggressively paying what you owe. My wife and I started this process about six months ago, and it's brought us closer together.

What do you do to keep from fighting over your finances? Have you used any of these ideas? Have they worked for you? Kris and I [mostly keep separate finances](#), so our approach is different. I'm curious to hear what works for people with joint accounts.

2. Money and Marriage -- Persuading Your Spouse to Save

<http://www.passionsaving.com/money-and-marriage.html>

She loves you.

Now you know that can't be bad.

--The Beatles, "She Loves You"

Marriage and Money: Suggestion #1 for Persuading Your Spouse to Save -- Keep Your Expectations in Check.

Understand that your spouse has a different personality than you and takes in information in different ways. Don't expect what works for you to work for your spouse.

It will probably take some for you to figure out what works for your spouse. Try to exercise patience.

Managing your money well is in many ways akin to managing your diet well. All of us who have tried to lose weight have had moments when we wished that results could be obtained more quickly. When I have one of those moments, I remind myself that weight isn't usually put on quickly either, and that that reality will help lock things in after the weight is taken off. It's like that with saving. Learning to save effectively takes time, but provides benefits for a long time to come. Approaches that generate quick results are suspect.

Marriage and Money: Suggestion #2 for Persuading Your Spouse to Save -- Keep Money Issues in Perspective.

Saving is important. I wouldn't have devoted so many years of my life to studying it if I didn't think it were a topic of great importance. I learn all the time of still more reasons for seeing saving as important.

It's not the only important thing, however. Don't let your desire to help your spouse learn how to save more effectively cause a rift in your marriage. Do not do this. Do not do this. Do not do this.

You are asking your spouse to change. That's difficult. Always keep in mind that you are asking something hard of your spouse.

Don't quit, though. Pushing too hard is a mistake. Pushing too soft is a mistake too. When you find yourself pushing too hard, remind yourself what the marriage means to you. When you find yourself pushing too soft, remind yourself what the marriage means to you.

Huh?

You will hurt the relationship if this matters and you drop it because you encounter some resistance. You have a need to have a spouse that manages his or her money more effectively. And your spouse has a need to have a spouse that pushed him or her to manage his or her money more effectively. Helping your spouse is part of the deal. Giving up isn't helping.

Apply only so much pressure, but do apply some pressure. I mentioned that this improvement project is hard on your spouse. It's hard on you too. The hard part for you is knowing just how much to push.

You need to rely on all of your knowledge of what makes your spouse tick to figure that one out. There is no such thing as a pure money topic. Successful money steps are money steps taken with an appreciation of how the money issues in question relate to other aspects of your quest to make something meaningful out of your life.

Money questions matter. Non-money questions matter too.

How to talk about and manage money within your family

Marriage and Money: Suggestion #3 for Persuading Your Spouse to Save -- Watch for the Miscommunication That Goes With Being in Love.

Everyone wants to manage his or her money effectively. I mean, come on.

The reason why you are hearing resistance to your ideas is that your spouse hears the words you say as signifying something other than what they signify for you.

You say: "I want to know that we will have enough money to be able to retire." Your spouse hears: "I want you to give up on some of your crazy dreams and start being more responsible and boring."

You say: "Do you really need to pay \$3 for coffee everyday?" Your spouse hears: "I don't think of you as being so special that you deserve extravagant treats just for showing up at work."

You say: "I'm worried that we have so little to fall back on if you lost your job." Your spouse hears: "I don't have confidence in you."

Does the fact that your spouse hears things in such scrambled-up ways mean that he or she is a doofus? Oh, no. It means that this guy (or gal) is in love with you!

A guy (or gal) who is in love with you can't stand to think that he (or she) is letting you down in any way. It's often not possible to talk with a spouse with as much ease as you can talk to a friend because your spouse is so much more than a friend. The more caring that is there, the more delicate is the communication issue.

Marriage and Money: Suggestion #4 for Persuading Your Spouse to Save -- Let Your Spouse Do it His or Her Way.

Some people cannot tolerate the idea of being given a set amount of spending money for the month. Some people are just fine with the idea. Don't assume that because you cannot stand it your spouse cannot stand it either. If that is what works for him (or her), use that.

Some people save by cutting out luxuries. Some people really enjoy luxuries and cannot bear the idea of giving them up. Perhaps your spouse can listen to pleas to spend less on luxuries, but not to pleas to give them up altogether. Perhaps you could frame your saving arguments in such a way as to persuade your spouse that saving effectively allows you both to enjoy more luxuries over the course of your lives.

You're trying to change your spouse and that's always a delicate business. Make the changes being suggested as palatable as possible by designing them in ways that makes sense to your spouse.

Marriage and Money: Suggestion #5 for Persuading Your Spouse to Save -- Make It Romantic.

The saving quest is a romantic quest.

There was something I read about divorce once that made an impression on me. The author of the book I was reading noted that couples that divorce can never look at their photo albums in the same way again. All of the pictures have that person in them, or some friend or relative of that person, or were taken in a place you went to with that person.

The photo album problem is hardly the biggest problem that comes with divorce. There's a sense in which it is a very big deal, though. We look at photo albums to review our progress through life. We feel weepy when we look at our high school yearbooks because we think back to the challenges we faced back then with the knowledge that we have overcome some of them that we thought we would not be able to overcome and we have failed to overcome some others that we thought we would be able to overcome. Our lives are a story. Every day we write the book on our romantic quest to make our lives mean something.

The point of saving is to become able to do more exciting things with your life. So many money advisors miss this. It's a point of critical importance. It's the reason why saving, properly understood, is not at all a boring business. It's exciting stuff.

Your spouse is your partner in your romantic quest and you are her (or his) partner in her (or his) romantic quest. Use this.

Budgets are sexy. True fact. Spend three hours going through each item in your budget and talking over how that money could be put to different uses so that both of you can make more of your lives and you are going to close the budget binder turned on about the idea of spending some quiet time with your spouse.

Please do try this at home. Budget sex is great sex.

Marriage and Money -- Suggestion #6 for Persuading Your Spouse to Save -- Celebrate the Victories.

How to talk about and manage money within your family

Each step forward creates momentum. Saving effectively gets easier and easier and easier over time. It's like running. It's boring the first time because you are out of shape. It's fun after you get good at it.

Don't get greedy when your spouse makes progress. You don't want to be a nag pushing for more. Remember the importance of patience. Let your spouse enjoy the satisfaction that comes with having made some progress. Have confidence that the wheels will begin to turn on their own power if you give them a chance.

At some point, your spouse will be asking questions about ways to save even more effectively. That will happen when he or she begins to think of the saving idea as his (or her) idea. If you nag, this never happens. If it happens, the wagon starts picking up speed quickly.

Marriage and Money -- Suggestion #7 for Persuading Your Spouse to Save -- Don't Let It Become a Chore

The single biggest reason why many people are not able to save effectively is that saving has come to be viewed in such negative terms. Saving is for tightwads. Saving is for misers. Saving is for losers. Saving is for the timid.

Don't sell it that way.

Saving is spending less on some things so that you can spend more on other things. Saving is spending less at some times so that you can spend more at other times. Saving, properly understood, is always about making better choices and obtaining greater value from a limited pool of earnings. Saving is buying freedom, and freedom is cool.

If your spouse has doubts about this, use some of the savings to finance a splurge. Make saving enjoyable. Think about diets again. You lose more weight on a diet that never again permits you to eat ice cream. Except for one thing. You don't stick with a diet that never again permits you to eat ice cream.

You want your spouse to sign on to a spending plan that will last for a long time. There's got to be some pleasure in it for that to happen.

Marriage and Money -- Suggestion #8 for Persuading Your Spouse to Save -- Do Your Part Regardless of What Your Spouse Does.

If you are denying yourself some things you would like to spend money on because you see the importance of saving and your spouse is not doing the same, you are going to feel temptations to give up the cause because it is not working out in a way that is "fair." That's mixed-up thinking.

First of all, you might persuade your spouse over time if you continue the fight on your own. If the spouse who believes in saving gives up, the battle is lost for good.

Second, you will not feel good about yourself if you go along with a spending program that you do not believe in just because it is the only way to get on the same track as your spouse. You want to lift your spouse up, you do not want to permit your spouse to pull you down.

Things change. The trick is being properly positioned when the change comes. Someday, someday, sometime, your spouse will show interest in saving. You want to be as well-developed in your saving habits as you can possibly be when that day comes.

Don't you end up being the spouse that caused the partnership's saving dream to fail.

With a love like that
You know you should be glad.
Yeah, yeah, yeah!
Yeah, yeah, yeah!
Yeah, yeah, yeah, **yeah!**

Balance in Our Life: What can we learn from St. Benedict and Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta?

Summary

Are you in control of your day? The Rule of St. Benedict offers wisdom into balancing our life and ministering to our body, mind and soul. Can you work for ten hours a day and keep a joyful smile? Why are the Missionaries of Charity founded by Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta able to work ten to twelve hours a day with the poor and still keep a joyful smile?

Objective

The family is called “the domestic church” and thus might also be called “the domestic monastery.” Given the busy lives that we lead, can we gain balance in our lives by looking at The Rule of St. Benedict; as well as, the daily schedule used by Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Benedict was a genius at understanding human nature. While he calls the monks to an austere life of work, prayer and study (sacred scripture), he also realizes that people need affection, understanding and love. One of the most famous of Benedict’s lines is that nothing in the monastic life should be “harsh or burdensome.” The monastic life is meant to be possible, and for it to be possible, Benedict calls for the strict expectations to be balanced with forgiveness, understanding and compassion. Benedict’s model abbot (the superior of a monastic community) is a wise, compassionate and forgiving father to his sons. As such **he is a perfect model for Christian fathers.**

Bible Readings

3. Luke 18:1

Then he told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary.

4. Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; also that it is God's gift to man that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil.

Catechism Readings

2. Paragraph 1

“God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, **at every time** and **in every place**, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength.

3. Paragraph 2745

Balance in Our Life: What can we learn from St. Benedict and Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta?

"Prayer and *Christian life* are *inseparable*, for they concern the same love and the same renunciation, proceeding from love; the same filial and loving conformity with the Father's plan of love; the same transforming union in the Holy Spirit who conforms us more and more to Christ Jesus; the same love for all men, the love with which Jesus has loved us. "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he [will] give it to you. This I command you, to love one another."

He "prays without ceasing" who unites prayer to works and good works to prayer. Only in this way can we consider as realizable the principle of praying without ceasing.

Small Group Questions

3. What takes priority in your daily schedule?
4. Do you schedule prayer and/or Mass in your day?
5. Are you ministering to the three aspects of your human person: Body, Soul and Mind through Work, Prayer and Study?

Recommended Resources

1. **"Saint Benedict for Busy Parents"**, by Father Dwight Longenecker, <http://www.kofc.org/un/en/resources/cis/cis327.pdf>
2. **"Finding Balance: Insights from Benedict for Family Life"** <http://www.stpaulsmonastery.org/7-benedictine-center/documents/FamilyLife.pdf>

Accountability

1. Which is most out of balance in your life: body (work), mind (study sacred scripture) or soul (prayer) and what can you add to your daily schedule next week to increase it?
2. If you only attend Mass on Sunday, try going to daily Mass one day a week for the next four weeks.

Author(s)

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Included Resources

"St. Benedict and the Wood-Chopping Way", by Father Dwight Longenecker, 9/4/2009

http://www.ncregister.com/site/article/st._benedict_and_the_wood-chopping_way/

Part of article included below:

Benedict's rule balances physical work with prayer and reading. For Benedict, prayer was essentially the liturgical prayer of the Divine Office. The monks go into church seven times a day to sing the Psalms, pray for the world and worship the Lord. The word *liturgy* actually means "work of the laity," so their observance of the liturgical life was also part of their work. In this way, their prayer was their work, and because they are encouraged to pray while they work, their work becomes prayer.

This integrated life — in which prayer is work and work is prayer — is completed by the third aspect: reading or study. In a time when books were scarce, the monks in St. Benedict's day would have spent their reading time memorizing not only all of the Psalms, but also great portions of other Scripture and selections from the great spiritual writers.

Balance in Our Life: What can we learn from St. Benedict and Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta?

This threefold balance of work, prayer and reading is a practical approach to a balanced life, but it also has a deeper significance. The three aspects of the Benedictine life reflect the three parts of the human person. **Work** ministers to our **bodies**. **Prayer** ministers to our **souls**. **Reading** ministers to our **minds**. Only when we have a balance of all three will we be able to develop as completely well-rounded human persons.

The threefold balance of Benedict helps us address our imbalance. Therefore, the individual who focuses only on the physical aspect of life is missing part of his development. The intellectual is incomplete if he ignores the physical and spiritual, and the person who is focused on nothing but prayer is also lacking in a development of the whole person.

If we want to observe the wisdom of St. Benedict, we will examine our own lives and try to make up for what is lacking, and the way to do that is to bring to mind which one of these three we find most difficult or unpleasant. If we find reading and study to be a bore, unfortunately, that's where we need to do some work. If physical work is not to our liking, then we need to engage in some "wood-chopping therapy." If we find prayer difficult, then prayer is what we need to spend more time on.

The final result of this threefold balance is that the whole person is being renewed. This is the final aim of the Christian life, as St. Paul writes to the Ephesians, to "grow up into the full manhood of Jesus Christ." **The final goal is to be transformed into the image of Christ — to become a living icon of the incarnate Lord, who was himself a perfectly balanced harmony of body, mind and spirit.**

St. Benedict's rule is deceptive in its simplicity. While it calls for the monks to engage in work, prayer and reading, all the time Benedict has his eyes on this higher goal. The entire activity in the monastery is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. St. Benedict says the monastery is "a school for the Lord's service." In other words, it is the environment in which souls can be sanctified.

How might we apply this same wisdom to our lives outside the monastery? As a husband and father — yes, you heard right; I am a convert to the Catholic faith from the Anglican priesthood — it is part of my responsibility to catch this threefold vision for my family, the domestic church. I need to make sure my children are engaged in the work that is required around the home. Suddenly, the kitchen duties, keeping their bedrooms clean, helping around the house, mowing the lawn and raking leaves all have a deeper significance.

Similarly, study or reading is important. In the modern world, this might include more than just book knowledge. It includes watching good films together, going to the theater to see good plays and opera, and helping the children read a whole range of uplifting, inspiring and challenging literature.

Finally, I must be actively involved in encouraging the family to pray on a regular basis. Seven times a day for liturgical prayer is not possible, but maintaining the discipline of grace before meals and prayer at the beginning and end of the day all help to continue the tradition of prayer as one of the aspects of the threefold balance.

As we develop the threefold balance, we will move to that place where, St. Benedict says, "We do all these things which were once duties because they are now our desire." When we get to that point, we will "run in the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with an inexpressible delight of love."

Balance in Our Life: What can we learn from St. Benedict and Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta?

2. Mother Teresa's Daily Schedule for the Missionaries of Charity:

The passages below are quotations of Mother Teresa from the book "*Loving Jesus*," edited by Jose Luis Gonzalez-Balado

1. OUR DAILY SCHEDULE:

To be able to give life like that, our lives are centred on the Eucharist and prayer. We begin our day with Mass, Holy Communion, and meditation.

Our community life is very closely-woven together. We do everything together: we pray together, we eat together, we work together.

Since we have only two saris, we wash one every day.

After Mass and breakfast, some Sisters go to the Home for Dying Destitutes, some to the leper colonies, some to the little schools we have in the slums, some take care of the preparation and distribution of food, **some go to visit needy families, some go to teach catechism, and so on.** They go all over the city (in Calcutta alone we have fifty-nine centres, the Home for Dying Destitutes is only one of them).

The Sisters travel everywhere with a rosary in their hands. That is the way we pray in the streets. We do not go to the people without praying. The rosary has been our strength and our protection.

We always go in twos, and we come back around 12:30 p.m. At that time we have our lunch.

After lunch, very often we have to do housework.

Then, for half an hour, every Sister has to rest, because all the time they are on their feet.

After that, we have an examination of conscience, pray the Liturgy of the Hours, and the *Via Crucis*, "The Way of the Cross".

At 2 p.m., we have **spiritual reading** for half an hour, and then a cup of tea.

At 3 o'clock, the professed Sisters again go out. (Novices and postulants remain in the house. They have classes in theology, Scripture and other subjects, such as the rules of monastic orders.)

Between 6:15 and 6:30 p.m., everybody comes back home.

From 6:30 to 7:30 we have adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. To be able to have this hour of adoration, we have not had to cut back on our work. **We can work as many as ten or even twelve hours a day in service to the poor, following this schedule.**

At 7:30 p.m., we have dinner.

After dinner, for about twenty minutes, we have to prepare the work for the next morning.

From 8:30 until 9, we have recreation. Everybody talks at the top of her lungs, after having worked all day long.

At 9 p.m., we go to the chapel for night prayers and to prepare the meditations for the next morning.

Once a week, every week, we have a day of recollection. That day, the first-year novices go out, because they are the ones who don't go out every day. Then all the professed Sisters stay in for the day of recollection. That day we also go to confession and spend more time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

This is a time when we can regain our strength and fill up our emptiness again with Jesus. That's why it is a very beautiful day.

2. The Family and the Poor:

We read in Scripture that God speaks of his love for us, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." (Jeremiah 31:3). And he also says, "I have called you by your name. You are mine. The waters will not drown you. Fire will not bum you. I will give up nations for you. You are precious to me. I love you. Even if a mother could forget her

child, I will not forget you. I have carved you on the palm of my hand. You are precious to me. I love you.” (Isaiah 43:1—4; 49:15—16).

These are the words of God himself for you, for me, for everyone, even for the poorest of the poor. For he has created us for greater things: to love and to be loved. He wants us to love one another as he loves us.

Let us stop for a moment to think about the tenderness of God’s love for us. There are thousands of people who would love to have what you have. And yet God has chosen you to be where you are today to share the joy of loving others.

To make this love more real, more loving, more living, he gives himself as the Bread of Life. He gives us his own life. He wants us to love one another, to give ourselves to each other until it hurts. It does not matter how much we give, but how much love we put into our giving.

In the Constitution of the Missionaries of Charity, we have a beautiful part which speaks of the tenderness of Christ, and also of his faithful friendship and love.

To make that love more living, more sure, more tender, Jesus gives us the Eucharist. This is why it is necessary for every Missionary of Charity to feed upon the Eucharist in order to be a true carrier of God’s love. She must live on the Eucharist and have her heart and life woven with the Eucharist. No Missionary of Charity can give Jesus if she does not have Jesus in her heart.

3. REASON TO BE HAPPY:

Why are the Sisters always smiling?

Because we are not social workers. We are trying to be contemplatives in the heart the world. We have chosen to be Missionaries of Charity, to be carriers of God’s love.

We have no reason to be unhappy.

How can that be?

If the words of Jesus are true, “I was hungry, I was sick, I was naked, I was homeless, and you it to me” (Matthew 25:40), then we are touching him twenty-four hours a day.

So you, in your lives, in your own homes, can be in his presence twenty-four hours a day, if your lives are woven with prayer and sacrifice.

4. SHARE THE JOY OF LOVING:

What does it mean to be a co-worker with the Missionaries of Charity? **A co-worker is a person or a family where there is love, peace and joy. If you have no peace and love in your own family or your own heart, how can you give it to others?**

Love, to be true, has to hurt. I hope you will learn that in your lives and share the joy of loving, because a co-worker is someone who loves God. If you love God, then you will love those around you. Then there will be joy, love and peace in your families. Then you will become carriers of God’s love.

We will be very blessed to have the joy this love brings of working together and making our work a prayer.

With Jesus, for Jesus, to Jesus. With God, for God, to God.

That way we are praying to God, not just doing our work.

When you are cooking, washing clothes, working hard in the office, do it all with joy. That will be your love for God in action!

Shared Dreams and Communications

Summary

What are Dreams?

Remember when you were kids, young adults, and you could spend hours on the phone with your sweetheart talking about nothing in particular? Perhaps that was a form of dreaming. But then we finished school, got married, bought a house, got a job, had children, etc. and started to do what we had to do every day. We became doers instead of dreamers. Perhaps we need to make time to dream again. Perhaps we need to take time to go beyond our daily routine. Perhaps it's time for you and your wife to open/reopen these creative channels in your lives. These areas that take you beyond the everyday can be defined as "Dreams".

Objective

To emphasize the importance of making shared plans with your spouse. Before you know it you will be looking at an empty nest. Don't wait until then to talk about your plans.

Bible Readings

1. Kings 3:5-15

"At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." Solomon answered... 'Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?' The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life." Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream."

2. Luke 14:28-33

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ...

Additional Information

Why are Dreams important to me and my wife?

What are your dreams? What are your wife's dreams? If you don't know the answer to these questions you have a great opportunity to know yourself and your wife better. Dreams are invisible but powerful. You cannot see them but they keep everything going. Your life may not be easier when you are actively dreaming, but it will be more exciting when you include your dreams in your daily routines.

The heart of every marriage is rooted in communications. When you and your wife have open communications your marriage has the fabric to be strong, happy, and exciting.

To paraphrase Matthew Kelly's terminology, to be the best version of yourself, and to have the best version of your marriage, get beyond your daily routine. A great way to get beyond your daily routine is to tap into your individual and shared dreams.

So if we are looking for a great way to open additional doors for communications with our wives it seems sharing our dreams is made to order to do just that.

How do I share my dreams?

The first step to initiate sharing dreams with your wife is to get a Dream Book. This is a notebook dedicated to recording and following up on your individual and shared dreams.

Now that you have your Dream Book take some time to write your dreams in the book. You might find it easier to write individually at first and then discuss your individual dreams. When it comes to your shared dreams, you will probably want to meet together to talk about your dreams as you record them. Organize your Dream Book to meet your needs as a couple.

The most important step is to write your dreams. The process of writing and sharing your dreams helps to make them real, and achievable. To help a new dreamer get started Matthew Kelly suggested these categories.

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1. Physical | 5. Psychological | 9. Creative |
| 2. Emotional | 6. Material | 10. Adventure |
| 3. Intellectual | 7. Professional | 11. Legacy |
| 4. Spiritual | 8. Financial | 12. Character |

Remember, nothing is too wild or wonderful. There are no limitations.

Now that you are meeting with your wife, sharing your dreams; you'll need to do some prioritization to help you focus on the dreams you agree are most important now. Be sure and schedule your next dreaming meeting as a part of each session.

The process of writing, discussing, and prioritizing your dreams will provide the additional communications SHARED DREAMS promised.

Our Dreams help make us great!

"Never underestimate the power of your dreams and the power of the human spirit.
The potential for greatness lives within each of us."

- Wilma Rudolph (Olympic Gold Medalist)

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream, not only plan, but also believe."

- Anatole France

And the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.....
(You've Got Mail)

The dreams of people may differ, but everyone wants their dreams to come true.
Not everybody aspires to be a bank president or a nuclear scientist,
but everybody wants to do something with their life that will give them pride and a sense of accomplishment.

And America, above all places, gives us the freedom to do that.

We have the freedom to reach out and make our dreams come true.

- Ronald Reagan

"When you have a really great dream, get up and go for it."

- Larry Page

"It's never too late to accomplish your dreams."

- Jim Morris (The Rookie)

"A person is not old until their regrets take the place of their dreams."

- John Barrymore

"When you write things down, they sometimes take you places you hadn't planned."

- Melanie Benjamin

Write down your dream, make your bucket list,
follow through.

"Believe you can and you're halfway there."

-Theodore Roosevelt

Stretch yourself beyond your comfort zone. Dare to dream the impossible. Work your dreams into reality

"I once had a dream, or should I say, my dream once had me." -
- Beatles

Here is a form that might help bring dreams to reality. Once you have a dream prioritized as important, you and your wife might take the time to complete this detailed plan.

Dream Detail

What do you want to accomplish? Be specific.

What is the schedule? Set a deadline.

What is the estimated cost?

What action steps do you need to take?

1-

2-

3-

4-

5-

To keep yourself on track remember, why is this relevant?

Small Group Questions

1. Do you discuss your plans and dreams with your spouse on a regular basis?

Accountability

1. The first step to initiate sharing dreams with your wife is to get a Dream Book. This is a notebook dedicated to recording and following up on your individual and shared dreams.

Author

Walt Moll & Tony Heekin

Recommended Resources

Reference: The Dream Manager by Matthew Kelly

<http://www.simplemarriage.net/dream-together.html>

http://www.goalsettingstrategies.com/goals_for_marriages.html

Mentor – Do you have one? Do you need one?

Summary

Mentor – are they only for new employees? Have you ever wondered if you need a mentor? Or how you would go about getting one? Have you considered having a Board of Directors for you?

Objective

- Have you ever wondered how some people seem to have it all together – or anticipate things well? Do you ever wish for a person or persons that you can bounce ideas off, to get advice, or to just be someone who can listen to you?
- **Mentorship** is a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. However, true mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help. It is about an ongoing relationship of learning, dialog, and challenge.
- "Mentoring" is a process that always involves communication and is relationship based, but its precise definition is elusive. One definition of the many that have been proposed, is
- Mentoring is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé)".
- Mentoring in Europe has existed since at least Ancient Greek times. Since the 1970s it has spread in the United States of America mainly in training context and it has been described as "an innovation in American management".
- Companies have mission statements and a Board of Directors. Your life is pretty important. Why not create a **Life Board of Directors** to help you through it? Pick 2 to 5 of your friends. Not necessarily your closest friends, but friends that are close enough where you can really confide but not so close that they can't see the big picture. Email them one a month, once a quarter or "once a crisis." Ask them for advice, lean on them, trust them.
- Assemble "Team You" and use **your** team to brainstorm directions and implementations of big decisions like moving to New York, or changing your business's direction, starting a new venture, or getting fit.
- Use your personal Board of Directors as one of the compasses in your life. You've got family, friends, perhaps faith, hobbies, values, etc. Add your Team to this list of personal compasses.
- In this discussion we encourage individuals who have had experience as a mentor – or if you've had a mentor to talk about the benefits you have received from the experience.
- We also want to discuss how to go about getting a mentor or being a mentor for those who are interested.

Some ideas:

Pick the right mentor.

First step is identifying someone who can be a good mentor for you. She points out that your mentor should be someone you respect and someone who's respected by others.

Remember that mentoring can take many forms.

That relationship certainly can take the form of an ongoing one-on-one connection, but you can also have what she calls "mentoring episodes" — briefer interactions where you still learn something valuable.

Ask for advice.

Asking someone to be your mentor is tough. Instead, if there's someone whose brain you really want to pick, or whom you'd like to develop a closer working relationship with, think of some specific things you want their advice on. Then ask them to get lunch or coffee with you to talk about them.

Set some guidelines beforehand.

Zachary suggests that when you're entering into a mentoring relationship with someone, you should have a talk with them — not just about what you want to learn, but about how you want the relationship to go. Talk about confidentiality — will what you say to your mentor stay between the two of you, or will she or he be sharing it with other people? Discuss how you'll handle any disagreements or problems that might come up. And make an agreement that if at any point the mentoring relationship ends, you'll make sure to have a "good closure conversation" that allows you both to express appreciation, talk about what you learned, and move on.

Check in frequently.

Zachary also advocates regular check-ins to make sure everything in the relationship is going smoothly. Touch base with each other about whether you're both getting your needs met — are you getting the advice you need? Are you being respectful enough of your mentee's time

With personal conversations, let the mentor set the tone.

Especially if you're friendly with your mentor, you may be tempted to talk about your personal life with him or her, and even to ask advice about personal matters. Depending on your relationship, this could be totally fine — after all, Ragins points out, a mentor can also be a friend. But she advocates that you "let the mentor lead the way with respect to disclosure."

Keep in touch if you switch jobs.

Ragins notes that even if you leave your job, "no one's going to make you give your mentor back." If your mentor was a coworker, you might not see each other or talk as much as you once did. But you can still keep in touch by email and at networking events in your field, and you can still benefit from your mentor's expertise. Ragins recommends that rather than having one mentor at any given time,

you should seek out multiple mentors, a "constellation of relationships" that give you the work wisdom you need.

Bible Readings

1. Ephesians - Chapter 6

And parents, never drive your [children](#) to resentment but bring them up with correction and advice inspired by the Lord.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2230

When they become adults, children have the right and duty to choose their profession and state of life. They should assume their new responsibilities within a trusting relationship with their parents, willingly asking and receiving their advice and counsel. Parents should be careful not to exert pressure on their children either in the choice of a profession or in that of a spouse. This necessary restraint does not prevent them—quite the contrary—from giving their children judicious advice, particularly when they are planning to start a family. (1625)

Small Group Questions

1. Do you have a mentor?
2. Do you want one?
3. Do you see the value in a mentor relationship?

Recommended Resources

1. Your BOD - <http://www.hanselman.com/blog/WhosOnYourLifesBoardOfDirectors.aspx>
2. Mentor – how to get and maintain - <http://jezebel.com/5864193/how-to-get-and-keep-a-mentor>

Accountability

1. Considering being a mentor or getting one!

Author(s)

Rich DelCore

How to be Happy in Life

Summary

God wants us to be happy.

Objective

While researching this subject it became clear that true happiness comes from the continued study of the word of God. By studying the bible, reading it daily, discussing it openly with Christian brothers and putting his word into action, we can move closer to the abundant and happy life that Christ wants to give us.

The Greek word translated "blessed" means "blissfully happy". The Lord Jesus promises that real, lasting happiness, along with God's provision of all our essential needs, will be ours, if we "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness", Matthew 6-33. That search is through reading God's word and earnest prayer to Him.

Bible Readings

1. Phil 4:11-12

For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

2. Romans 15:13-14

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. John 13-17

For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you... If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.

4. Job 36:11

If they obey and serve him, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment.

5. Psalm 118:24

This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2548

Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. "The promise [of seeing God] surpasses all beatitude. . . . In Scripture, to see is to possess. . . . Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive."

2. Paragraph 1818

The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

3. Paragraph 45

Man is made to live in communion with God in whom he finds happiness: When I am completely united to you, there will be no more sorrow or trials; entirely full of you, my life will be complete (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 10, 28, 39: PL 32, 795).

Small Group Questions

1. What are some ways to be happy today?
2. What are some things that we can control that will make us happy?
3. How can we better prepare our children for a life of happiness?
4. Share your thoughts on happiness amongst the group.

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.googlesyndicatedsearch.com/u/catholicity?s=happiness&q=happiness+site%3Awww.catholicity.com%2Fcatechism%2F>
2. <http://www.bibleed.com/bibleteachings/christianlife/happiness.asp>
3. Our Happiness by Matthew Kelly
<http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/2010/09/our-happiness/>
4. <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=+Romans+15%3A13-14&version=NIV>
5. The Rhythm of Life by Matthew Kelly
<http://www.matthewkelly.org/bookstore/the-rhythm-of-life>
6. The Four Levels of Happiness REV. ROBERT SPITZER, S.J.

Accountability

1. Make a commitment to study the bible on a regular basis and grow closer to Christ.
2. Make a commitment to serve others within and outside of your family and live the life of “doing unto others”.
3. Study the 5 steps in attached article.

Author(s)

Dave Karsten and Michael Copfer

Included Resources

1. Five Steps to Better Mental Health – According to St. Paul by [Msgr. Charles Pope](#)
<http://blog.adw.org/2012/07/five-steps-to-better-mental-health-according-to-st-paul/>

Step I. Rejoice in the Presence of the Lord - The text says, *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your moderateness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

Step II. Rely on the Power of the Lord – The text says – *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition...present your requests to God.*

Step III. Remember the Provision of the Lord - The text says, *with thanksgiving,*

Step IV. Rest in the Peace of the Lord - *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Step V. Reflect on the Plan of the Lord - *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice.*

Letting Our Children Fail

Summary

No one wants to let their child fail. It can be one of the hardest and rewarding things we do for our children. When do we let them fail? How do we be there for them without being there for them too much?

Objective

Have you ever looked at some of the things that are going on in your kids' lives and wondered why they are doing something or the other? You may wonder why they just won't listen to you and gain knowledge from your experience. Have you thought that maybe God is allowing these situations in our children's lives in order for them to become what He desires for all of us? If we constantly bail our children out when they get in trouble from their own device or if we constantly monitor and control situations and their environment to keep them safe, they will never gain all of the above. So when we as parents always say that it seems our kids must learn the hard way, remember that this is not only true but it is by design.

Perhaps we should teach them godly ways and allow them the freedoms appropriate to age to make their own decisions but don't interfere with the natural consequences if they are hard on them. Create a godly home and expose them to a godly lifestyle but don't manipulate in order to control certain outcomes. Even though our kids' tribulations may often be of their own doing, God can still use these times to foster dependence on Him and a desire to live a godly life if we stay out of the way.

When we rescue them we really do them a disservice because we not only cheat them out of a spiritual growth experience but also a regular life experience. So the next time your son or daughter is bent on finding something out on their own, let them. Don't hold back or stand in the way of any natural consequences that come from it. God has a purpose for disobedience; let Him pursue it.

Bible Readings

1. Romans 11:30-32

³⁰ For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. ³² For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

2. Proverbs - Chapter 22:6

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

3. Ephesians 2:12-13

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2206

The relationships within the family bring an affinity of feelings, affections and interests, arising above all from the members' respect for one another. The family is a *privileged community* called to achieve a "sharing of thought and common deliberation by the spouses as well as their eager cooperation as parents in the children's upbringing."

2. Paragraph 2207

The family is the *original cell of social life*. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society.

Small Group Questions

1. Think of a time when you let your child fail. Discuss the outcome with the team.
2. Think of a time when you wished you let your child fail but you didn't. Discuss the outcome with the team.

Recommended Resources

- <http://g12studyjournal.blogspot.com/2008/08/let-your-kids-fail-sometimes.html>
- http://www.sinaitemple.org/learning_with_the_rabbis/writings/LettingOurChildrenFail0222.pdf

Accountability

1. Is there an opportunity to let your child fail in the near future? Think about what they would learn from this lesson.

Getting Through Spiritual Dry Spells

Summary

Ever feel like you are just going through the motions. Like you are going to church because you know it's right, but it just isn't making that special connection. How do you work your way out of it? What can you focus on to bring you back to a rewarding relationship with God and the church?

Objective

It seems like a lot of people go through spiritual dry spells. People sometimes feel apathetic about their relationship with God and/or feel like God's voice is silent during a difficult time. The objective is to provide some practical tips for getting through times of spiritual dryness.

Bible Readings

1. Hebrews 11:6
And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
2. Job 30:20
"I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me.
3. Matthew 8:26
He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2088

The first commandment requires us to nourish and protect our faith with prudence and vigilance, and to reject everything that is opposed to it. There are various ways of sinning against faith:

Voluntary doubt about the faith disregards or refuses to hold as true what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief. Involuntary doubt refers to hesitation in believing, difficulty in overcoming objections connected with the faith, or also anxiety aroused by its obscurity. If deliberately cultivated doubt can lead to spiritual blindness.
2. Paragraph 162

Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man. We can lose this priceless gift, as St. Paul indicated to St. Timothy: "Wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith." To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be "working through charity," abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church.

Small Group Questions

1. What do you do when you are going through a spiritual dry spell?
2. Is there some activity, sacrament or inspirational book that helps you get back on track with your spiritual journey?
3. Have you talked with a priest or spiritual advisor during this time? How has this been helpful?
4. How has FathersTeam been helpful in this process? How can FT be improved in this regard?

Accountability

1. Ask yourself – is there anything I am doing to block God's voice? Take time to reflect on what you have been doing lately.
2. Have you been praying, receiving the sacraments, going to Adoration etc.?
3. Are you filling your life with other distractions?

Author(s)

Tony Heekin and updated by John Fahrmeier

Included Resources

From <http://www.conversiondiary.com/2009/07/9-tips-for-spiritual-dry-spells.html>

Make sure you're not doing anything to block out God's voice

- Is there specific sin in your life that is blocking your relationship with God?
- Are you holding a grudge against someone?

Keep praying (no, seriously, keep praying)

- Mix up your prayer life a bit. Add the rosary if you are not currently saying it. Pray with your spouse.
- A spiritual dry spell is not the time to start subtracting spiritual practices that you once felt called to do.

Receive the sacraments

- Increase the frequency with which you receive the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession. As with prayer, it's tempting to slack off on going to Mass or Confession if it doesn't lead to an emotional experience, but the sacraments are channels of grace regardless of how we feel when we receive them.

Read inspiring spiritual books

Mother Teresa's Secret Fire

In the Shadow of His Wings

Come Be My Light

He Leadeth Me

Finding God's Will for You

10 Prayers God Always Says Yes To

Make sure there's not a physical cause

- Though we always have free will to turn to God no matter what the circumstances (as I was recently reminded), I've found that if I'm staying up too late, constantly eating junk food, not exercising, pushing myself too hard, etc., I'm far more tempted to turn away from God than when I'm feeling good physically -- and this alone can lead to spiritual dry spells.

Make sure you're recharging your batteries

- This is similar to the above, but it's so important yet so often overlooked that I think it's worth addressing as a separate point. It is critically important to understand how you recharge your batteries, i.e. knowing what activities give you energy vs. what activities drain your energy.

Find a spiritual director

- Spiritual directors can help you work through questions like, "Am I doing something to block out God's

voice?", "What could be the purpose for God's silence in my life right now?", "How can I keep praying when I feel so unmotivated?" etc.

Consider counseling

-If you think you might have serious unresolved issues in your life that are impacting your relationship with God, you may want to consider finding a Christian counselor to help you gain peace in those areas of your life.

Research the Christian understanding of spiritual dry spells

-If you've done all of the above and nothing is better, it may simply be that God is withholding spiritual consolation from you for a reason.

Reconciliation

Summary

Reconciliation is a Sacrament that many Catholics tend to exclude from their lives. Many of us grew up and “went to confession” because either our parents or teachers told us to. Going to confession was often an uncomfortable act. As a result, many Catholics stopped participating. The Roman Catholic viewpoint on reconciliation is also one of the differences in belief between Roman Catholics and other Christian religions.

Objective

The objective is to re-introduce everyone to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- Why do Catholics find it necessary to confess to a priest?
- Why is it important to go to reconciliation regularly?
- When was the last time you participated in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Are there actions that you regret and weigh heavy on you?

The Catholic Church offers a solution – the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Bible Readings

1. John Chapter 21, 21-23

Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.

2. Matthew Chapter 6, 14-15

If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

3. 1 John Chapter 1, 8-9

If we say, “We are without sin,” we deceive ourselves,^{*} and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.

4. Matthew Chapter 9:6-8

But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . .” Then he said to the paralytic, “Get up, take your mat and go home.”⁷ And the man got up and went home. ⁸ When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.

This verse shows that God has given the authority to forgive sins to "men." Hence, those Protestants who acknowledge that the apostles had the authority to forgive sins (which this verse demonstrates) must prove that this gift ended with the apostles.

Otherwise, the apostles' successors still possess this gift. Where in Scripture is the gift of authority to forgive sins taken away from the apostles or their successors?

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1420

" Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, man receives the new life of Christ. Now we carry this life "in earthen vessels," and it remains "hidden with Christ in God."¹ We are still in our "earthly tent," subject to suffering, illness, and death.² This new life as a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin."

2. Paragraphs 1422

"Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion."⁴

3. Paragraphs 1441

" Only God forgives sins.³⁹ Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, "The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" and exercises this divine power: "Your sins are forgiven."⁴⁰ Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name.⁴¹"

4. Paragraphs 1442

" Christ has willed that in her prayer and life and action his whole Church should be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation that he acquired for us at the price of his blood. But he entrusted the exercise of the power of absolution to the apostolic ministry which he charged with the "ministry of reconciliation."⁴² The apostle is sent out "on behalf of Christ" with "God making his appeal" through him and pleading: "Be reconciled to God."⁴³

Additional Information

Why do Catholics find it necessary to confess to a Priest?

- The bible verses above demonstrate to need to confess to the successors of the apostles....today's priest
- As Catholics, we believe that the priest is acting "in persona Christi" (in the person of Christ) during the sacrament of reconciliation. During the sacrament of Reconciliation, we are confessing to Christ....not a man.
- The concept of "perfect contrition" – Perfect contrition means that we are sorry for our sins out of love for God and truly sorry for having offended him, not because we fear retribution or going to hell. It is nearly impossible for us as humans to be perfectly contrite. This is evidenced by our continuing to commit the same sins over and over.

Through the sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest is given the authority to forgive our sins even when we are not perfectly contrite.

Why should I go to confession on a regular basis?

Reconciliation

Page 67 of 117

- The Church recommends that we go to confession at least once per year or whenever a “grave” sin is committed.
- Going more frequently, every two or three months, helps us identify our “favorite sins”. If you find yourself confessing the same things over and over, you can zero in on problem behaviors and make corrective action.

How do I make a good confession?

- Try to find a good Priest to go to regularly. One that is not too tough but not too easy either.
- Pray for 15 minutes before going to confession, in front of the Blessed Sacrament if you can.
- Concentrate on the Ten Commandments.
- If you are not sure if something is a sin or not, it probably is. Confess it!

Small Group Questions

1. Have you had a bad reconciliation experience? If so, what happened?
2. Have you recall a good reconciliation experience? If so, what made it special?

Recommended Resources

http://catholicism.about.com/od/beliefsteachings/p/Why_Confession.htm

<http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Ten-Reasons-to-Go-to-Confession-Sist...>

<http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/2012/04/deacon-bickerstaff-catholic-response-to-comm...>

Accountability

1. Commit to going participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Author

Ken Mai & Tony Heekin

Included Resources

http://catholicism.about.com/od/beliefsteachings/p/Why_Confession.htm

The Sacrament of Confession

By [Scott P. Richert](#), About.com Guide

Common Misunderstandings:

Confession is one of the least understood of the [sacraments](#) of the Catholic Church. In reconciling us to God, it is a great source of grace, and Catholics are encouraged to take advantage of it often.

What is Confession?

What is its purpose and its effects?

What are its requirements?

Can we confess our sins directly to God, or must we go through a priest?

Confession Is a Sacrament:

The [Sacrament of Penance](#), commonly called Confession, is one of the [seven sacraments](#) recognized by the Catholic Church. Catholics believe that all of the sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ himself. In the case of Confession, that institution occurred on [Easter Sunday](#), when Christ first appeared to the apostles after his Resurrection. Breathing on them, he said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained" (John 20:22-23).

The Marks of the Sacrament:

Catholics also believe that the sacraments are an outward sign of an inward [grace](#). In this case, the outward sign is the absolution, or forgiveness of sins, that the priest grants to the penitent (the person confessing his sins); the inward grace is the reconciliation of the penitent to God (which is why the sacrament is also sometimes called the [Sacrament of Reconciliation](#)).

The Purpose of Confession:

That reconciling of man to God is the purpose of Confession. When we sin, we deprive ourselves of God's grace. And by doing so, we make it even easier to sin some more. The only way out of this downward cycle is to acknowledge our sins, to repent of them, and to ask God's forgiveness. Then, in the Sacrament of Confession, grace can be restored to our souls, and we can once again resist sin.

What Is Required?:

Three things are required of a penitent in order to receive the sacrament worthily:

He must be contrite—or, in other words, sorry for his sins.

He must confess those sins fully, in kind and in number.

He must be willing to do penance and make amends for his sins.

How Often Should You Go to Confession?:

While Catholics are only required to go to Confession when they are aware that they have committed a [mortal sin](#), the Church urges the faithful to take advantage of the sacrament often. A good rule of thumb is to go once per month. (The Church strongly recommends that, in preparation for fulfilling our [Easter Duty](#) to receive communion, we go to Confession even if we are aware of [venial sin](#) only.)

The Church especially urges the faithful to receive the Sacrament of Confession frequently during [Lent](#), to help them in their spiritual preparation for Easter.

Why Is Confession Necessary?:

Non-Catholics, and even many Catholics, often ask whether they can confess their sins directly to God, and whether God can forgive them without going through a priest. On the most basic level, of course, the answer is yes, and Catholics should make frequent [acts of contrition](#), which are prayers in which we tell God that we are sorry for our sins and ask for His forgiveness.

But the question misses the point of the Sacrament of Confession. The sacrament, by its very nature, confers graces that help us to live a Christian life, which is why the Church requires us to receive it at least once per year. Moreover, it was instituted by Christ as the proper form for the forgiveness of our sins. Therefore, we should not only be willing to receive the sacrament, but we should embrace it as a gift from a loving God.

2. POSTED BY SR. MARY ANN WALSH

<http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Ten-Reasons-to-Go-to-Confession-Sist...>

Confession: It puts you straight with everyone

Reconciliation

Page 69 of 117

Penance, aka confession, is the sacrament of the forgiveness of sin. You can't beat it for convenience. It's available practically whenever. Tell a priest you want to go to confession and you'll get his attention. One bishop I know was cornered on an airplane. Another passenger figured out what was going on and asked if he could confess too. It must have been an interesting game of musical seats. An interesting question for priests might be: Where was the strangest place you ever administered the sacrament of penance? The answers I've gathered include "in a sports bar, at a graduation party" and "on the golf course, walking up the fairway."

Confession has benefits. Here are ten:

Confidentiality guaranteed. There's nothing like confessing your sins to someone guaranteed not to tell anyone else. Sometimes you need to talk in absolute confidence. Even under subpoena, a priest can't tell anyone what's said to him in confession. He can't even hint at it. Now that's confidentiality.

Housekeeping for the soul. It feels good to be able to start a clean life all over again. Like going into a sparkling living room in your home, it's nice when clutter is removed – even if it's your own.

A balm for the desire for revenge. When you have been forgiven you can forgive others. If the perfect Jesus forgives me, who am I to want to avenge the slights in my life. Think: "Why did they promote him over me?" or "Mom played favorites!"

Low cost therapy. It's free, which makes it cheaper than a psychiatrist for dealing with guilt.

Forced time to think. Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living. To examine our lives and acknowledge failings marks the first step of making things right with God, others and ourselves. Life can be more worth living when you ponder the meaning of your own life.

Contribution toward world peace. *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, said that the imbalances in the world that lead to war and tensions "are linked with that more basic imbalance which is rooted in the heart of man." Peace of soul leads to peace of heart leads to peace beyond oneself.

A better neighborhood. Confession leaves you feeling good about yourself, thereby cutting back the inclination to road rage and aggressive shopping cart driving. With the grace of the sacrament you're energized to, as Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, "go and sin no more."

Realistic self-perception. Confession helps overcome arrogance when you have to admit you're as much of a sinner as anyone else. It helps build tolerance for others' perceived shortcomings

One more benefit of being Catholic. There are lots of benefits, including a sense of community, liturgical rites to help us encounter God in prayer, and the wonderful sense of humanity exemplified in the saints, from Mary, the loving Mother of God, to Augustine, the exasperating son of Monica. The sacrament that leads us to inner peace is among the greatest boons.

Closeness to God. Confession helps you realize that you have a close connection to God and receive his grace through the sacraments. What can be better than knowing God's on your team, or, to be less arrogant about it, that you are on God's.

3. [A Catholic Responds – Five Common Protestant Objections to the Sacrament of Confession](#)

[Deacon Mike Bickerstaff](#)

<http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/2012/04/deacon-bickerstaff-catholic-response-to-comm...>

In discussing the Catholic faith with non-Catholics, the doctrine concerning confessing one's sins to a priest often arises. Indeed, in my experience, the Sacrament of Reconciliation ranks right up there with Marian Dogmas among the Church's teachings that prompt the most questions from those inquiring about the Catholic Faith. The following objections to the doctrine are those about which I am most often asked to respond.

Objection #1 – Only God can forgive sin.

Catholics teach that a priest can forgive sin, but a priest is only a man. Isn't it true that only God can forgive sin? I don't mean in a way that any of us can forgive one another, but in the way that God forgives and saves us.

Reply to Objection #1:

It is true that only God can forgive sin (on His own authority). But, God has chosen to delegate that authority. When a priest with faculties to absolve sin says the words of absolution during Confession, he forgives the penitent's sins by the power and authority of Christ conferred to that priest through Holy Orders. The priest thus acts in the person of Christ (in persona Christi).

Christ delegated this authority to his priests much in the same way that any higher authority delegates its authority to its ambassadors and others who represent the higher authority.

Objection #2 – The bible does not teach that a man can forgive sin.

What you said seems to me to be a man-made explanation, not God's teaching. Show me where you find this in the bible.

Reply to Objection #2:

That men are delegated the authority from God to forgive sin on his behalf is clearly a part of Divine Revelation. Two passages show this ambassadorial relationship.

*"And there people brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Courage, child, your sins are forgiven.' At that, some of the scribes said to themselves, 'This man is blaspheming.' Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said, 'Why do you harbor evil thoughts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' – he then said to the paralytic, 'Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home.' He rose and went home. When the crowds saw this they were struck with awe and **glorified God who had given such authority to human beings.**" (Matthew 9:2-8, emphasis added)*

*"So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. **So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us.** We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:17-20, emphasis added)*

There are two means by which sin is forgiven through the agency of man according to the bible.

a) Through Baptism

Before a person is baptized, he is guilty of Original Sin and, if baptism occurs after the age of reason, of personal sin. When a person is baptized, all personal sin, Original Sin and the punishments due to sin are wiped clean. The baptized believer is thus born again and receives the grace of justification. Protestant terminology says that this person is justified and saved. Catholic terminology says that this person's soul is in the state of Sanctifying Grace. Not all Protestants believe that baptism is necessary to be justified and saved. But the following passages demonstrate the truth of the Catholic teaching.

Christ commanded his apostles to baptize.

"The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, 'All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:16-20)

Baptism is a condition of salvation.

*"He said to them, 'Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes **and is baptized** will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.'" (Mark 16:15-16, emphasis added)*

Peter preached that repentance and baptism is for the forgiveness of sin.

*“Peter (said) to them, ‘Repent and **be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 2:38, emphasis added)*

Peter teaches that baptism saves the believer.

*“For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit. In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. **Baptism**, which corresponds to this, **now saves you**, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...” (1 Peter 3:20-21, emphasis added)*

Ananias instructs Paul that baptism will wash away his sin.

*“A certain Ananias, a devout observer of the law, and highly spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me and stood there and said, ‘Saul, my brother, regain your sight.’ And at that very moment I regained my sight and saw him. Then he said, ‘The God of our ancestors designated you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the sound of his voice; for you will be his witness before all to what you have seen and heard. Now, why delay? **Get up and have yourself baptized and your sins washed away**, calling upon his name.’” (Acts 22:12-16, emphasis added)*

b) Through Confession of Sin to God’s minister (a priest)

Baptism does not remove a person’s inclination to sin (called concupiscence by Catholics). Therefore, it is likely that a baptized believer will personally sin after baptism. Some of those sins might be so grave that they result in the loss of Sanctifying Grace. God does not pretend that this does not happen. Instead, in his mercy, God has provided an ordinary means for such a sinner to appeal to him for forgiveness and a restoration of grace, similar to when he was first saved through Baptism.

Jesus gave his Apostles the authority and power to forgive sin as documented in John 20. Some Protestants will argue that this pertains to preaching the Gospel and that forgiveness results from the faith of the believer alone. The argument goes, “The gospel is preached, those who accept it are forgiven their sins, those who don’t have their sins retained.” Of course this is not at all what the text says:

*“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, **‘Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’**” (John 20:19-23, emphasis added)*

Paul speaks of the ministry of reconciliation and the ambassadorial relationship he exercises.

*“So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and **given us the ministry of reconciliation**, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God.**” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20, emphasis added)*

How is the believer reconciled to God? The passages above clearly show the involvement of God’s ministers in the process of reconciliation. More is required than faith or belief alone. James makes this point in his epistle:

So also **faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead**. Indeed someone might say, “You have faith and I have works.” Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works. You believe that God is one. You do well. **Even the demons believe that and tremble**. (James 2:17-19, emphasis added)

Objection #3 – But I don’t need a priest, I can go directly to God and ask forgiveness.

I have a personal relationship with the Lord. I often go to him in prayer, asking him to forgive my sins. Why would I need a priest to get in the way?

Reply to Objection #3:

Anyone, of course, can go directly to God and pray for forgiveness. Indeed we should do so as soon as we are aware of having sinned. But the Church teaches and the scriptures support that God desires people to confess to him through his priests.

The Jewish leaders persisted in accusing Jesus of forgiving sins. And Jesus admitted that he did. The above passage from Matthew 9 demonstrates that Jesus did so in his human nature, having authority from God. In the above passage from John 20, Jesus states specifically that he was passing on this ministry and authority, given him by the Father, to his apostles. People of his day denied that Jesus had this power. It is no wonder that some in our day deny that his priests have this power.

Whether or not one understands the *why*... the *what* and *how* are clear. God desires it, so we should do it.

Objection #4 – If you are saved, nothing more is required.

When a person is saved, he cannot lose his salvation. All of your arguments presume that one can lose salvation.

Reply to Objection #4:

This reveals a misunderstanding of how we are saved. First, the sacraments are not works of men, but of God who works through his sacraments. It is no more a work for a person to present himself for baptism or to confess his sins to a priest than it is for a person to answer an altar call in a protestant service or to pray the Protestant's "Sinner's Prayer".

Second, a person must do more than believe to be saved, he must do something... cooperate with God's grace in some way... be baptized... seek forgiveness from God in the way that God desires... (see above passages). God's loving call to us demands our response. Our baptism and our sacramental confessions are simply necessary components of that response as are our acts of faith, hope and love.

Third, salvation can indeed be lost. When we accept God's invitation through belief and baptism, we are justified (receive Sanctifying Grace) and have begun the process of salvation through an ongoing conversion. It is possible to reject this freely offered gift of salvation from God through future sin. If we lose this grace, we once again accept his call through sacramental confession. The notion of "once saved, always saved" is not only not found in scripture, we are warned against believing in such a thing.

*"Now I am reminding you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. Through it **you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.**" (1 Corinthians 15:1-2, emphasis added)*

*"All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it. Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, **I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.**" (1 Corinthians 9:23-27, emphasis added)*

*"Therefore, **whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall.** No trial has come to you but what is human. God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:12-13, emphasis added)*

*"Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I glory in my ministry in order to make my race jealous and thus save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the firstfruits are holy, so is the whole batch of dough; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place and have come to share in the rich root of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. If you do boast, consider that you do not support the root; the root supports you. Indeed you will say, 'Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.' That is so. They were broken off because of unbelief, but you are there because of faith. So do not become haughty, but stand in awe. For if God did not spare the natural branches, (perhaps) **he will not spare you either.** See, then, the kindness and severity of God: severity toward those who fell, but God's kindness to you, provided you remain in his kindness; **otherwise you too will be cut off.**" (Romans 11:13-22, emphasis added)*

Objection #5 – Evidence shows that Catholic Sacraments do not work.

Confession is nothing more than a permission slip to keep on sinning. People keep on sinning after going to Confession, so it doesn't work. Same with the Sacrament of the Sick – people are anointed but die anyway. Doesn't this prove that your sacraments are not effective?

Reconciliation

Reply to Objection #5:

In regards to the Sacrament of the Sick, the Church does not teach that it is a guaranteed remedy for bodily illness. While it may be God's will to heal bodily illness through the sacrament on some occasions, it is also a sacrament that heals our spiritual sickness and prepares us for death. It is clearly illustrated in scripture.

"Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven." (James 5:14-15)

In regards to the sacrament of Confession, it is taught that the grace of the sacrament helps the person to avoid future sin; it is not taught that the sacrament is a guarantee against all future sin. The Sacrament of Confessions is no more a permission slip to keep on sinning than is what Protestants mean by "accepting Jesus and one's personal Lord and Savior".

Sex in your Marriage: Is it as God intended or not at all?

Summary

Who can you talk to about the sex in your marriage, are you talking to your spouse about it, is your marriage healthy from a physical point of view as the church intends, have you ever wondered what's normal for couples in their 30's, 40's or 50+? Join us for a discussion on this subject with a Catholic Sex Therapist – Dr. William Wester.

Objective

- While we all joke about sex in our marriage, for some couples, there is no sex in the relationship. One definition of a 'sexless marriage' is having sex less than 10 times per year. Also, surveys suggest that over 20% of couples report they are in a sexless marriage.
- We will provide a forum for the men of the Father's team to be able to have a discussion with their spouse about the health of their sex life and how it reflects on the overall relationship and the teachings of the church.
- We will also again engage a Catholic Sex Therapist – Dr William Wester - to join us for the large group discussion.
- According to the Church, humans are sexual beings whose sexual identity extends beyond the body to the mind and soul. The sexes are meant by divine design to be different and complementary, each having equal dignity and made in the image of God. The sexual act is sacred within the context of the marital relationship that reflects a complete and life-long mutual gift of a man and a woman. Sexual sins thus violate not just the body but the person's whole being.
- Spousal love, according to Church teaching, is meant to achieve an unbroken, twofold end: union of husband and wife as well as transmission of life. The unitive aspect includes a person's whole being that calls spouses to grow in love and fidelity "so that they are no longer two but one flesh". The sacrament of matrimony is viewed as God's sealing of spousal consent to the gift of themselves to each other. Church teaching on the marital state requires spousal acceptance of each other's failures and faults and the recognition that the "call to holiness in marriage" is one that requires a process of spiritual growth and conversion that can last throughout life.
- Throughout Church history, various Catholic thinkers have offered differing opinions on sexual pleasure. Some saw it as sinful, while others disagreed. We are fortunate to have Pope John Paul II Theology of the body which has been discussed this summer in a 4 week session. While we plan to incorporate elements of TOTB we want to make sure we take advantage of the resources who will join us for the session (Dr Wester and Dave Shea).

How we plan to prepare for the session:

1. We plan to prime the pump for the discussion about 3 weeks ahead of time with a handout that you can reflect on and potentially talk with your spouse. This will be some questions and dialog from Dr Wester for your consideration.

2. For 2 weeks ahead of the session – we will pass our index cards (like we did previously) and ask you to anonymously list your questions and concerns about the health of your marriage from a sexual point of view to prepare Dr. Wester in his comments at the meeting.
3. For the large group session – we would hope to have Dr. Wester and Dave talk about the common themes that were reflected in the card questions and provide a list of resources for your follow-up after the meeting and in small group discussion.

Bible Readings

1. 1. Corinthians 7:1-5

Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1646

By its very nature conjugal love requires the inviolable fidelity of the spouses. This is the consequence of the gift of themselves which they make to each other. Love seeks to be definitive; it cannot be an arrangement "until further notice." The "intimate union of marriage, as a mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children, demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable union between them."

Small Group Questions

1. Are you in a sexless marriage – can you use today's topic to start a discussion with your spouse?
2. Thinking about your marriage and the commitment with your spouse. Is your first priority what is best for her or do you put yourself and your wants first?
3. Have you considered reading the Theology of the Body – For Beginners – Christopher West?

Recommended Resources

1. Theology of the Body – For Beginners – Christopher West?

Accountability

This week try to find a way to talk to your spouse about taking your Marriage a Conjugal Relationship to a better level that will allow the two of you to grow even close to one another and to God.

Author(s)

Rich DelCore

Dealing with Loss

Summary

It is inevitable. At some point in most everyone's life, the pain of the loss of a loved one must be confronted. What do you do when you face the numbing loss of a family member or friend? How do you live through it? What must you do to support those who share your grief and move forward with your life?

Objective

Help us to recognize that recovering from the death of loved one takes time and patience. It's important to remember that healing is a journey, not a destination. Our human nature causes us to grieve, but we as Catholics are comforted in the faith that our loved ones have merely completed their earthly lives and are at peace with their creator.

Bible Readings

1. John 11: 25-26

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

2. John 14: 1 – 4

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where (I) am going you know the way.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1889

In this new universe, the heavenly Jerusalem, God will have his dwelling among men. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."

2. Paragraph 1932

The duty of making oneself a neighbor to others and actively serving them becomes even more urgent when it involves the disadvantaged, in whatever area this may be. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

Small Group Questions

1. Do you avoid people who are going through tough times because you don't know how to act or know what to say?
2. What am I doing to prepare for the passing of a loved one?
3. What am I doing to prepare for my own passing?

Recommended Resources

1. “Why Bad Things Happen to Good People” – Harold S. Kushner
2. <http://www.thedailymind.com/how-to/how-to-support-a-loved-one-through-tough-times>
3. <http://www.freewebs.com/kindnesshandbook/> - The Kindness Handbook

Accountability

1. Think through the reality of losing a friend or loved one and give thought to actions you should take.
2. Give some thought to losses you have endured and actions that you wish you would have taken.

Author(s)

Reid Rooney / Tony Heekin

Included Resources

1. “If you’re going through hell, keep going.” – Winston Churchill

Every now and then life throws you a curve ball. Your best friend gets cancer, your wife loses her job or your daughter breaks up with her first high school love. In these trying times it is important to support your loved one’s and be a rock for them to lean on. But this can be harder than it sounds, especially when you are emotionally affected by the event as well.

In this post I want to show you a few ways to support a loved one through a tough time based on my own experiences. Hopefully it will give you a bit of inspiration for when tough times strike your loved ones.

Dealing with feelings of helplessness

One of the most difficult things about supporting a loved one through a tough time is how utterly helpless you feel. You might be the person’s mother, father, sister or brother – it doesn’t matter – when a loved one is suffering you feel helpless.

Imagine if your spouse was diagnosed with a serious illness tomorrow. This is the person who you have loved and supported for years and years. Someone with whom you have cried, laughed, fought and made love. Someone who has been there for you whenever you were down. And now they are sick. And there is nothing that you can do to change that.

It is a shit feeling.

But it is just a feeling. It is in your head. And it is natural. So let this be a warning to you. When tough times strike someone you love be ready for those feelings of helplessness because they will always arise. But don’t let them get you down. If you let them get you down you won’t be any help to anyone.

How to support a loved one through tough times

Now I would like to get into the bulk of this post and share with you some things I have learned over the years about how to support a loved one through tough times. I am by no means an expert on these matters but it seems like I have spent a considerable part of my life trying to support friends and family who were experiencing some hardship. I’ll try to pass on what I have learned.

Don’t judge

When someone is suffering because of a mistake they have made the last thing they want to hear is your judgments. It really doesn’t help the situation at all and, in fact, can make your loved one less likely to come to you for support.

Let’s look at an example. Let’s say your daughter is in high school and she has just fallen in love with the football quarterback. You think he is a bit of a “player” and you know your daughter is going to end up heart broken. After a few months he cheats on her and she comes home in tears, her heart is broken and life

Dealing with Loss

Page 78 of 117

cannot go on. If you decide to say “I told you so” she will never come to you again because she is afraid of being judged. The pain she is going through is lesson, she doesn’t need another one from you.

When people are going through suffering because of mistakes they made it is a bad idea to judge them. Just be there for them and don’t inject your values or opinions in the situation unless they ask for them. 99% of the time they won’t want to hear them.

Don’t make it about you

When I was a young man I was fanatically in to soccer. I played for one of the top teams and took it extremely seriously. I would get up and train at 5am every morning before class and then had training at the club after school four times a week. I lived and breathed soccer. And when the finals came around I became what I now consider to be a bit of a monster. I was crazy. I trained so hard and stressed out so much. So you can imagine how I felt when we lost the grand final because I missed a penalty kick...

I will never forget that day as long as I live. When I see my old soccer buddies they still ask me if I have been practicing my penalties! It burns. And I will never forget sitting in the car with my father after the match and hearing him jabber on for what seemed like an hour about how he had been a great sportsman as a teenager and that even he had made mistakes. I really didn’t want to hear about it.

When I look back I realize that, in his own spastic way, he was just trying to help. But at the time it seemed like he just wanted to talk about how much better he was than me. And it made me really angry. When someone is suffering it is really important not to talk about yourself too much. Even if you have been through something similar to what your loved one is going through it is a good idea just to keep quiet. Make sure you just support them. Don’t make it about you.

Take care of yourself too

If you are going through a long term tough time it is important that you take care of yourself as well. If you neglect to do this you will be a tired and emotional wreck and you will struggle to support those around you.

When someone in your family gets sick everybody goes a bit crazy. They mobilize the relatives, take time off work and run around like headless chickens. And this is understandable. A family illness is one of the toughest things anyone can go through. When something tragic is happening people don’t want to stop and sit down because then their mind will automatically turn to the bad stuff. Keeping busy means keeping distracted. But you have to take care of yourself.

If you are going through a tough time make sure you are sleeping properly. Make sure you are eating properly. Make sure you are taking care of yourself. If you get run down you will be less able to support your loved ones.

Get yourself some support

One important part of supporting a loved one is getting some support for yourself. Many people who are helping people through difficult situations neglect to address this issue. And it is a shame. You cannot do it all alone. You cannot take on everybody’s problems without having an outlet. It is just too difficult. If you try to do it alone you could end up breaking down yourself.

I tried to take on a lot of my family’s problems when I was younger. I tried to be the knight in shining armor that saved the day and I tried to be everybody’s rock. But there was a limit to how much I could handle. There was a limit to how much I could absorb without bursting. It is important to acknowledge these limits.

If you are spending a lot of time supporting a loved one I strongly recommend you go and get some counseling. Don’t be afraid to do this. Counselors are not for crazy people. Counselors are for people who need someone to talk to without having to worry about weighing them down with your problems. If your loved one is suffering you might feel like you can’t talk to them because you don’t want them to have more worry. If this is the case book in to see a counselor and have a chat, debrief and get some advice on how to proceed.

Find a source of inspiration

Something that religious people always say after a tough time is that their “faith” got them through. While many non-religious people may find the notion of relying on “faith” to be off-putting there is an extremely

good logic to it. If religion is good for anything it is good for giving one strength. But non-religious people can find other non-theistic sources of inspiration to help them reach the other side.

Some people find inspiration in God. Others find inspiration in the Dalai Lama, Gandhi or Oprah. They rely on these people or the ideals that they represent to give them strength. The strength could come from praying to this figure or by just recalling their example and feeling revitalized. During tough times I always find inspiration in my Bodhisattva Vow. This is a vow I was given by my Buddhist teacher where I promised to spend my life working for the benefit of others. I promised to dedicate every thought, word and action to the benefit of other sentient beings and never to put my own selfish pursuits ahead of the needs of others. This gives me great strength during tough times and I feel has made me better equipped to deal with hardships.

Take some time to find something that inspires you. Inspiration is not just for religious or spiritual people. Basketball players, great leaders, doctors, nurses etc. – they all have sources of inspiration that they rely on when things get tough. Make sure you have one too.

Learn as much as you can

Knowledge is power. It is also a powerful way for you to support someone. The more you know about what they are going through the more supportive you will be able to be.

Imagine your wife or husband has depression but you don't know much about it. You might take all the symptoms to be attacks on you and just think they are just being moody, grumpy or mean. In actual fact they are suffering from a disease and the mood swings and angry responses are symptoms of their illness and need to be dealt with carefully.

If you educate yourself on the problem, whatever it is, you will find yourself better able to deal with the person and more able to support them. This is one of the best pieces of advice I can give you.

Bring everything back to love

Love is an extremely potent thing when you are feeling terrible. In all situations, whatever your loved one is going through make sure they know they are loved.

When you are depressed, sick or sad the best thing in the world is knowing that someone loves you. It might be someone telling you that they love you or you might see it in the way they look at you or the way they treat you. However it is expressed it is very uplifting to know that you are loved.

Make sure you bring everything back to love when you are supporting a loved one. If you don't quite know what to do just make sure you love them. Make sure they know you love them. Many times you will find that this, in itself, is enough.

Conclusion

Supporting a loved one through a tough time can be extremely difficult. It can be tiring, emotionally draining and sometimes depressing. But it is in these trying times that we learn who our closest friends and family members are. This is where the true bonding occurs and allows us to take our relationships to new heights.

Why do we “have to” go to Mass???

Summary

Have you ever heard or even muttered the phrase -why do we “have to” go to mass - on a Sunday morning? It would be so much easier to just stay in bed and not hassle with the kids. This session will explore ways to focus on the positive reasons for going to Mass, and the positive change your life can experience from “really” attending Mass.

Objective

Eight years old, or in your eighties, you’ve likely struggled with going to mass at times. Perhaps that spark is not there, that desire to spend time with God and your faith community. You may think mass is boring, you don’t like the homily, or they sing too much. Maybe you convince yourself that you don’t need Mass – you can go outdoors and experience God, or just stay at home in the comfort of your living room.

Even though you know that going to Mass is a good thing, you may focus on the negatives to talk yourself out of it. I’m too busy, too tired, I just get bored, or I can’t focus for thinking about all of the other things I could be doing.

The power of positive thinking can change your entire perspective on Mass and allow you a whole new experience. Thinking about Mass as a special time to connect with God and the people of your parish can help you change your attitude toward Mass. What if you concentrated on the things you like about your parish, the people you say hello to, those things that make you feel good after celebrating Mass. Find positive ways, among the team, that attending Mass affects your day and your week.

Research shows that people who go to church every week are:

- Less likely to suffer from depression
- Less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol
- More likely to have a solid sense of right and wrong
- More likely to live a longer and happier life

Included below are ten reasons to go to Mass. Perhaps you can make it fun and do a “David Letterman” style top 10 list to lighten the mood and then work your way into the topic discussing the meaningful 10 reasons listed below.

Bible Readings

1. Hebrews 10:24-25

We must consider how to rouse one another to love and good works. We should not stay away from our assembly, as is the custom of some, but encourage one another, and this all the more as you see the day drawing near.

2. Luke 9:1-6

He summoned the Twelve and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal [the sick]. He said to them, “Take nothing for the journey, neither walking stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no one take a second tunic. Whatever

Why do we “have to” go to Mass???

house you enter, stay there and leave from there. And as for those who do not welcome you, when you leave that town, shake the dust from your feet in testimony against them." Then they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2180

The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass." "The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day.

2. Paragraphs 1378

Worship of the Eucharist. In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession."

3. Paragraph 1382

The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. But the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion. To receive communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us.

Small Group Questions

1. Do you and the family attend Mass regularly? If so, what's special and what things are a challenge to your attendance.
2. How do you encourage young children to attend Mass with you and how can they get more out of it?
3. Do your teenagers or young adults attend Mass with you or alone? If yes, what things can you share about how you succeeded. If no, how might you help change that?

Recommended Resources

1. Why do we have to go to Mass book:
<https://www.google.com/url?q=http://catalog.osv.com/Catalog.aspx%3FSimpleDisplay%3Dtrue%26ProductCode%3DX423&sa=U&ei=m8cEUI IEKre0QG46KimCA&ved=0CAcQFjAB&client=internal-uds-cse&usg=AFQjCNFNJ9ayQBhKHeOuu IOUJnt1-rt5Q>
2. Ten things Catholic Catechists should know:
<http://www.osv.com/DesktopModules/EngagePublish/printerfriendly.aspx?itemId=8553&PortalId=0&TabId=7621>

Accountability

1. This would be a good week to examine what you get out of Mass and how you can strengthen it.
2. Talk to children about re-engaging in Mass if they have fallen away.
3. Prepare for that next time you have to explain to your spouse, youngster, or teen/young adult about the value of attending Mass.

Author(s)

Dan Lape with material supplied by Michael Copfer

Why do we "have to" go to Mass???

Included Resources

Why do we “have to” go to Mass?

https://catalog.osv.com/PDFs%5CP692_web.pdf

1 God asks us to make one day holy. God asks us to set aside one day to refocus physically, mentally, and spiritually. We live in a secular world. Going to Mass helps us to see everything from a different perspective. We begin to see in the depths of our being that God is in charge. We can let go of our own agenda because we know that God will inspire us, guide us, and strengthen us for the week ahead.

2 Jesus gives us the gift of himself. When we go to Mass, we are doing what Jesus commanded his followers to do. It is a command to love and to be loved by God. Jesus offers himself to us in the Word of God that we hear and in his Real Presence, offered to us in the Blessed Sacrament at Communion.

3 We need to be part of a community. When we come together at Mass to pray and worship God, we fulfill a deep need inside of us to be in communion with other people. The other parishioners — even if we don’t know all of them — give us support, affirmation, and encouragement in our attempt to live the Gospel message. They help us to see that we are not alone. They remind us that we are all part of the Body of Christ.

4 God has a special message for us. When we listen to the readings, the homily, and the prayers of the Mass, God speaks to us in a special way. We should come away from each Mass with at least one inspiration that will impact our lives in some way. We just have to pay attention and be open to what the Lord is trying to tell us.

5 We need to talk to God. When we go to Mass, we speak to God through our singing, our communal responses and prayers, and our personal prayers from the depths of our hearts. During the Mass, we have the opportunity to ask God for what we need, promise God that we will do what He wants us to do, and thank God for the many blessings He has bestowed upon us.

6 People need our prayers. We can pray for other people anytime, but when we pray for others during Mass, we pray in a special way. It doesn’t matter if the other people are separated from us by distance or by death. The Mass brings us together in the Body of Christ, and we become the communion of saints. It is part of the cosmic dimension of the Mass that unites heaven and earth by reaching across time and space.

7 We need to stand up for what we believe. Being a follower of Jesus is counter-cultural. At every Mass, we have the opportunity to stand up and proclaim what we believe publicly. We admit that we believe in God, in Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, in the Catholic Church, in the communion of saints, in the forgiveness of sins, and in life after death. It is a powerful statement of allegiance and an opportunity to recommit ourselves.

8 We need to acknowledge that we make mistakes. At every Mass, we have the opportunity to review the past week. We admit that we have sinned in thought, in word, in deed, in what we have done and what we have failed to do. We seek forgiveness, and we are assured that God still loves us. Before we receive Communion, we admit that we are not worthy and ask God to heal us. Going to Mass helps us to strengthen our commitment to live moral lives.

9 We need ritual in our lives. Mass is a ritual, which means that through the repetition of prayers, movements, and the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, we are formed, disciplined, and consoled. The “sameness” of the Mass carries us along the spiritual journey — even when we don’t “feel” like praying. The “sameness” of the ritual allows us to be transformed on a soul level, even if we are unaware of what is happening.

10 We need to experience something bigger than ourselves. When we go to Mass, we share in the death and resurrection of Jesus. When we offer our ordinary lives to God through Jesus, we enter into God’s great plan for the world. We are strengthened by the Eucharist and sent out into the world to bring the Gospel message to all people. The Mass gives meaning and purpose to our lives. It gives us a sense of destiny and offers the kind of peace that the world cannot give. It helps us develop a sense of wonder and awe. It helps us to see that there is something bigger than ourselves.

Why do we “have to” go to Mass???

Do you believe in miracles?

Summary

No, we're not talking about Al Michael's famous call of the 1980 Olympic Games when the USA beat Russian in hockey. Well, then again, maybe we are. Miracles are happening every day. Some small and some not so small.

Objective

The bible is full of miracles from both the old and New Testament. The important thing about miracles is not the greatness of the event. Our Lord wants us to keep in mind that miracles need to be heaven sent and we shouldn't need them to validate our belief in him. He also warns of false prophets in the final days and to be wary of the things they say and do.

That being said, let's thank our Lord for all we have and not take things for granted. There are miracles happening every day in our lives. The miracle of birth, the miracle of communion, the miracle of a new day dawning, and the miracle of skyline's great taste. Just want to make sure you're reading. Identifying these things as miracles from our Lord help keep us focused on him and the great miracle and promise of everlasting life.

Bible Readings

1. John 3:2

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

2. Matthew 10:1

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

3. Matthew 24:24

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 548

The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him. To those who turn to him in faith, he grants what they ask. So miracles strengthen faith in the One who does his Father's works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God. But his miracles can also be occasions for "offence"; they are not intended to satisfy people's curiosity or desire for magic. Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus; he is even accused of acting by the power of demons.

2. Paragraphs 434

Jesus' Resurrection glorifies the name of the Savior God, for from that time on it is the name of Jesus that fully manifests the supreme power of the "name which is above every name". The evil spirits fear his name; in his name his disciples perform miracles, for the Father grants all they ask in this name.

Small Group Questions

1. What miracles have you witnessed this week?
2. What are some things you have taken for granted that can now be looked at differently?
3. Have you ever asked for anything in "Jesus" name? If not, do so this week.
4. Is it a miracle we are here at 6:03 every Friday?

Do you believe in miracles?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.bible-verses-by-subject.info/bible-verses-by-topic-starting-with-m/bible-verses-about-miracles.htm>
2. <http://catholiceducation.org/articles/apologetics/ap0048.html>
3. <http://christiananswers.net/dictionary/miracle.html>
4. Al Michaels 1980 call of the miracle on ice
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTev5pSuYLk>

Accountability

1. Really look at the weekend and the week ahead in a different light. Pray that Christ reveals to you the miracles of every day. Ask for his help and to help other in his name.
2. Report back to your group next week and discuss what you saw.

Author(s)

David Karsten

Teaching your Children the importance of God, Family and Friends

Summary

Do we take it for granted that our children will know the importance of God, family, and friends? One of the most important things we can do in life is to make sure our children understand how important this is as well as what it takes to continue to grow in the faith.

Objective

It is our duty as Fathers to uphold the teaching regarding the importance of God to our families. We do this by loving example and at times needed discipline. We are called to lead our families to Christ and to nurture the process along the way. The focus on the importance of God will transcend in the decision making of how our children choose the friends in their lives as well.

We can get help with this by following Seven Lessons Fathers Should Teach Their Children by Deacon Mike Bickerstaff (see resources)

1. Teach by Word and Deed
2. Be a Family of Prayer
3. Make the Home a Place of Peace, Hope and Love
4. Live Simply, Give Generously, Be Present
5. Teach Your Children the Faith
6. Live the Sacramental and Liturgical Life
7. Get to know St. Joseph

Bible Readings

1. Genesis 18:19

For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."

2. Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

3. Isaiah 54:13

All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children.

4. 1 Corinthians 15:33

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."

5. Ephesians 4:29-32

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be

Teaching your Children the importance of God, Family and Friends

put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2223

"Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery – the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones." Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children...

2. Paragraph 1655

"Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary. The Church is nothing other than 'the family of God.' From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers 'together with all [their] household.

3. Paragraph 1656

"In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica* [Domestic Church]. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are 'by word and example . . . the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation.'"

Recommended Resources

1. How to teach your children about God

http://www.ehow.com/how_6083735_teach-children-god.html

2. Bible Verses About Children- 25 Inspirational Scripture Quotes

<http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/bible-verses-about-children-25-inspirational-scripture-quotes/>

Accountability

1. Really look at the weekend and the week ahead in a different light. Pray that Christ reveals to you the miracles of every day. Ask for his help and to help other in his name.
2. Report back to your group next week and discuss what you saw.

Author(s)

David Karsten

Included Resources

1. Seven Lessons Fathers Should Teach Their Children

<http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/2012/06/deacon-bickerstaff-lessons-of-our-fathers/>

Who Introduced You to the Lord?

The first question I would like to pose, is simply this: "How did you come by your faith, whether it be weak or strong, new or old? Where and when did you first come to encounter Jesus and his glorious Gospel?" For many of us, the answer would be, "I first came to know Jesus in my home, from my father and mother."

Teaching your Children the importance of God, Family and Friends

This is not the case for everyone, but, it is the general plan of God that our first witnesses and teachers of the faith are our parents who share the good news of salvation with their children. For this reason, the family is referred to as the Domestic Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) teaches of the role of the family.

CCC 1655 – *“Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary. The Church is nothing other than ‘the family of God.’ From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers ‘together with all [their] household.’ (Cf. Acts 18:8) When they were converted, they desired that ‘their whole household’ should also be saved. (Cf. Acts 16:31; Acts 11:14) These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world.”*

It was no accident, rather, it was the will of God that Jesus Christ was conceived of woman and born into a family where he was lovingly raised and received experiential knowledge as he matured from infancy to adulthood. Everything Jesus received from that family experience is an example for us to follow. Nothing of his life is to be neglected by us as if it were irrelevant to our lives. The same is true of every word written in Sacred Scripture.

What You Should Desire for Your Children Above All Else?

So then, this is the second question, “Just how deeply do we parents desire that our children, along with ourselves, should also be saved?” You see, each Christian is called to be “salt” of this earth where too many things have soured and a “light” in a world too often filled with darkness. Note what the catechism says above, “These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world.” Such is the both the dignity and obligation of Christians, to become witnesses to an unbelieving world and to form families; domestic churches that are islands of Christian life.

Our vocation is the path by which we journey to Heaven. God has called each of us by name to Himself. In baptism we each received a share in the divine mission and a responsibility to be faithful to that mission. When a man and a woman answer God’s call to the vocation of marriage, they agree to live out this responsibility together as man and wife, and if blessed by children, then also together as father and mother. The obligation of their baptismal calling expands in a particular way to include the sanctity and salvation of their spouse and children.

CCC 1656 – *“In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica* [Domestic Church]. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are ‘by word and example . . . the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation.’”*

Teaching your Children the importance of God, Family and Friends

I grew up in the 1950's-1960's. I raised my children in the 1980's-2000's. Without falling into a sense of false nostalgia, I believe I can say that in relative terms, my childhood took place in a much more simple and safe time compared to the time of my children. And today, the world has become even more complex and more "alien and even hostile to faith". Therefore, the second question posed above is clearly one of great urgency and it is critical that we understand the obligations of our vocation.

CCC 1657 – *"It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the priesthood of the baptized in a privileged way 'by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, and self-denial and active charity.' Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and 'a school for human enrichment.' Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous – even repeated – forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life."* (Cf. Mt 11:28)

When I recall my childhood, the specific occasions remembered are those times and events that, at the time, held special relevance to me. It is difficult to predict what an adult will one day remember of his childhood. But know this, children are like video recorders, capturing everything. One day, when the need arises, an adult will pull from his memory banks examples to serve him in time of need. Will these memories serve him well, leading him to life or will the wrong message and example be there, leading him to wrong and destructive choices? I was blessed with good and holy parents; I can only hope, now that my children are grown, that they are able to say the same about me.

Too often in our families, the handing on of the faith falls upon the shoulders of our mothers. And may God richly bless those holy women who have been faithful to the good God by introducing the faith to a new generation.

But, fathers, we must ask ourselves where we are in this most important of responsibilities entrusted to us by God. The witness to faith is not nearly so strong within the family if mother and father send mixed messages to their children.

What memories are we, as fathers, making for our children?

Seven Lessons Fathers Should Give their Children

This is not a comprehensive list, but I would like to share a few lessons I have learned as a child and a father that I believe are crucial. I encourage you to add to this list in the "combox" below.

1. Teach by Word and Deed

Do our words match our examples? You have heard it said that you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time. I would like to modify that. You can never, over time, fool your children

even some of the time. Children seem to have a built-in detector for hypocrisy. Fathers, do you think that you can teach your children to love and honor their mother if you don't love and honor her in both your words and actions? It's not going to happen. Nor will you likely succeed in any area if your words and actions do not match. So, fathers, teach by word and deed.

Going to Mass, making a novena or praying a family rosary was never a chore for my mother. These were joyful expressions of her love for Jesus, His Blessed Mother and His Church. Even in later years as I struggled to maintain and grow my faith, the memory of the example given me by my mother served as an anchor keeping me from crashing against the rocks of the pagan culture of my college years. I may not have demonstrated that to her at the time, but it is true nonetheless. One thing I always knew – my mother was praying for me. And deep in my heart, I knew that my father who had died when I was 16 was praying for me too. He was not Catholic, but he supported my mother's efforts at every step. At that time, I retained the sense of the importance of God because God was important to my parents. They taught me this by their deeds. And I could feel their prayers. Because they taught my sister this too, I knew she also was praying for me. My life and the example of my family has taught me to never discount the power of prayer.

2. Be a Family of Prayer

This leads me to the topic of prayer. One of the great errors of our time is the failure of the individual Christian to advance in the prayer life and of the family to pray together. We are never going to truly know God until we become people of deep prayer and our children are not going to learn from their parents how to pray until they see them in fervent, urgent, persistent, faithful, expectant prayer – praying alone, praying together as husband and wife, and praying together with the entire family. No, we are not going to always feel like praying. And the devil is going to throw up obstacles, making us feel like we have no time to pray. Nor will our children always want to pray. But we must be faithful to God in our efforts to pray. And in this, fathers should take an active and leading role.

First, fathers need to commit to their own prayer life and that means more than simply reciting vocal prayers. We must practice meditative prayer – the Church teaches that this expression of prayer is a necessity for the beginner – pondering in our hearts the events in the life of Christ and His Holy Family, reflecting on the lives of the saints, praying the scriptures, and thinking about the persons of God and the truths entrusted to the Church.

Second, pious practices such as grace before and after meals, a morning offering, blessing ourselves when driving past a Church where Christ is sacramentally present, offering a "Hail Mary" when seeing an ambulance or firetruck speeding down the road, all serve also as teaching moments for our children.

Third, fathers should encourage the family to come together on a regular schedule to pray a family rosary. This is a great way to introduce your children to the practice of prayer. There are endless ways to practice prayer as a family.

My previous pastor told the story of how his vocation to the priesthood developed in spite of all the obstacles he encountered on the road to ordination. He has vivid memories of his family praying an evening rosary together daily. But he remembers something more. After all had turned in for the night, he would hear, and sometimes look into his parents bedroom to see his parents (father and mother) praying together at the end of the day when none of the children were watching. This told him that prayer for them was really important. Their example provided him the fortitude to answer his call.

3. Make the Home a Place of Peace, Hope and Love

Peace and concord in the family is so important, yet it seems to be under fire more than ever. We are told in Scripture to be of one mind, yet members of families today seem to each have their own life and wants. Especially in these difficult economic times, the tendency is to allow worry and anxiety to permeate the home. Do you bring the troubles of work home to fester within the home? Do your children think that your work is more important than they are?

Saint (Padre) Pio of Pietrelcina wrote, “Don’t worry about tomorrow because the very same Heavenly Father who takes care of you today will have the same thought tomorrow and always. . . What does a child in the arms of such a Father have to fear? Be as children, who hardly ever think about their future as they have someone to think for them. They are sufficiently strong just by being with their father.” Make sure that the environment of the home provides this example for our children. Our children should be raised to believe, “Jesus, I Trust in You.”

4. Live Simply, Give Generously, Be Present

Love, honor and respect for one another in the home and for those outside the home should be faithfully practiced. Charity should prevail in all things. In this increasingly materialistic world, we do our children a grave disservice by the excessive accumulation of possessions. We teach them to love creation more than the Creator. Resist all disordered attachments that keep you from advancing in the life of grace. Living simply allows us to live with a generosity of spirit that teaches children to care for their neighbor who is in need... remember Our Lord’s teaching that when we fail to serve the least of our brethren, we fail to care for Him.

Look for ways to reach out beyond the family to assist those in need, both with your financial means and with your presence. Involve your children. Have them contribute to a charitable fund from their allowance. Involve them in preparing aid packages for the local shelter and food bank. Take them with you, where appropriate, to serve in person those less fortunate.

Teaching your Children the importance of God, Family and Friends

Most of all, be present to your children... patient and loving, firm and steadfast. Protect them from the evil of the world and help them discover their vocation from God.

5. Teach Your Children the Faith

It is simply not enough to expect the local parish or Catholic school to be the sole teacher of your children when it comes to what the Church teaches. We must take an active role as their primary teachers.

CCC 2223 – “Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery – the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the “material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones.” Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children...”

This “primary” roles means it is both before and above all others who are teachers of our children. We need to teach them in all the ways already discussed, plus we need to make sure that our children do not grow up to be doctrinally illiterate. Teach them their catechism, read the bible with them, and make discussion of heavenly matters and their role as pilgrims on this earth a natural part of the family experience. They were made for heaven, so keep their eyes fixed on their supernatural home even as you help them navigate the waters of this temporary world. Teach them the human virtues of the life of grace by which they can overcome sinful tendencies. Teach them “what a wonderful savior we have in Jesus.”

6. Live the Sacramental and Liturgical Life

While the family is the first, that is, the Domestic Church, the Christian family is also a part of the larger family of God, the Church. Therefore, as parents, we have a grave responsibility to make sure that our children participate in the life of the parish, especially in the liturgical life and sacraments. As our children grow, their involvement in worship as part of the Catholic parish should be fostered through practice and education. The Mass will never be “boring” to one who has been raised to understand what it is. Assist at Holy Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days, even while traveling on vacation... even if it is very inconvenient to do so. Take your children to Confession regularly – help them prepare and teach them not to be afraid. Show them God’s mercy and love. Develop in them a love for the Blessed Sacrament.

7. Practice Devotion to St. Joseph

Get to know St. Joseph. Meditate and reflect on his life and example. God did not entrust Jesus to only Mary, but also to Joseph. Find in him an example to follow

Teaching your Children the importance of God, Family and Friends

and a powerful intercessor in prayer. Call on him in prayer each day as you raise your children and honor their mother.

There are many other lessons which could be included here. I hope you will share them with one another. We need to instill in our children the sense that they have been called to a high and noble purpose. Teach them to give praise and honor to God and to be grateful for His many blessings and to be good stewards of His gifts. How wonderful it is to be a part of this family which is the Catholic Church.

Love Thy Neighbor

Summary

Who really is your neighbor? Is it just those that live near you, those that you know or is it other people? In today's world, we seem to be isolated and distant, often times with little social interaction, by using Facebook, Twitter etc, do we have time to even know anybody. With our busy schedules of children, activities and interests, do we even have time or want to have time to know, much less love our neighbor.

Objective

Life does come at us fast. Just think of all that you did yesterday and all that is on the schedule for today. It seems like life will never slow down, we don't seem to even have enough time for our children and wives much less loving our neighbor. How can we show appreciation for those around us that affect our lives, if we barely know them? Think about people that come in and out of our lives, that impact us, in a not so positive way; the neighbor next door that doesn't take care of his property, the co-worker that only seems to want to complain about everything, the pushy women with the cart and three children in Kroger, who just wants to get her list accomplished, regardless of the busyness of the store.

Ever have a disagreement with a coach, somebody at one of your children's sporting events, or a co-worker. Have you set a good example for your children about forgiveness and forgetting, or have you set the example of the traditional feud?

The ultimate question is how do we teach our children what loving our neighbor is, and the importance of loving our neighbor by how we deal with those in our lives.

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 22:36-40

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

2. 1 John 4:20-21

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraphs 2208

The family should live in such a way that its members learn to care and take responsibility for the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped, and the poor. There are many families who are at times incapable of providing this help. It devolves then on other persons, other families, and, in a subsidiary way, society to provide for their needs: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world."¹²

Small Group Questions

1. Who are your neighbors, and do you actually talk or have social interaction with them.
2. When was the last time you experienced a random act of kindness and how did that make you feel?
3. Have you ever performed a random act of kindness and what was the reaction of the recipient of this act?
4. Do you have an example of when you could have done a better job of loving your neighbor?
5. Do you have a good example of loving your neighbor?

Accountability

1. Do you have a neighbor or acquaintance who you avoid at all costs? Can you put yourself in their shoes and try to communicate, just a little?
2. How can you change the way you show love for your neighbor? How can you set that example for your children?
3. Start small and work your way up. Can you make a commitment to grant that random act of kindness to someone this week?

Author(s)

Dan Lape and Jack Gauche

Included Resources

1. Love Your Neighbor As Yourself
<http://www.believers.org/believe/bel208.htm>

Eight times in the Bible we are told to love our neighbor -- one of the Bible's most repeated commands.

Loving your neighbor is the opposite of selfishness -- the common human practice. Acting in divine love demonstrates that unselfishness is possible for a human -- showing a reality that cannot be ignored or denied.

Whether they appreciate you, or respond to your love, Jesus's command is still valid: You must show love to your neighbor in a practical way.

Who Is A Neighbor?

When Jesus was asked by someone who his neighbor was (Luke 10:29), Jesus responded by telling the story of the Good Samaritan -- who helped a stranger in need by the roadside. Then, in verse 37, Jesus told the man to go and do like the Good Samaritan.

A neighbor is someone who is near-by *wherever* you are.

2. Love Thy Neighbor - What's the Origin of this Phrase?
<http://www.allaboutgod.com/love-thy-neighbor.htm>

"Love thy neighbor" is a term that's become almost clichéd over the years. But where did it originate, and what does it really mean? In a time when neighbors, at least in America, are people we rarely see (thanks to garage door openers and busy lives), or are thought of as nuisances with barking dogs and noisy children, how can we possibly love our

Talking and Listening to God

Summary

When do you talk to God? When you're in a bind or need something? Talking to God is important, and we should resonate to Him when times are tough. However, for a closer relationship with God, we have to talk with him on a regular basis, and then listening to God is imperative. Do we only know how to talk to God and ask or tell Him what to do or are we trying equally as hard to listen to what God wants from us?

Objective

The really sad thing about not talking and listening to God, is that you miss a golden opportunity to draw closer to God, to get to know him better, and to let him know that you realize that you want and need his help. When you fail to talk and listen to God, you greatly limit God's ability to accomplish the things that he wants to do in your life. When you don't communicate with God you miss the Godly advice given at James 4:8, "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you". Instead, when you don't talk or listen to God you pretty much tell him that you don't need him, that you can do things on your own, that his advice and his concern are not needed, that you are very capable of going through your life under your own power and doing it your own way.

Taken from reading resources below:

And talking to God should be the same as if you were talking to your best friend. You should tell him your thoughts, desires, hurts, and problems, as well as giving him your thanks and praise. Talking to God not only tells God that you have knowledge of him but that you also have faith in him. Talking to God also tells him that you have a desire for his presence in your life and that you need him and are dependent on him.

The bottom line is, we have to make an effort to put ourselves into situations where God can talk to us. The more we truly listen, the more likely we are to act in a manner that is pleasing to God and more joyful for ourselves. How do we talk to God now, and how do we improve our talking and listening skills with God?

Bible Readings

1. 1 Samuel 3:9

'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'

2. Genesis 18:16-32

With Abraham walking with them to see them on their way, the men set out from there and looked down toward Sodom. The LORD considered: Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, now that he is to become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth are to find blessing in him? Indeed, I have singled him out that he may direct his children and his household in the future to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD may put into effect for Abraham the promises he made about him. So the LORD said: The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave, that I must go down to see whether or not their actions are as bad as the cry against them that comes to me. I mean to find out.

As the men turned and walked on toward Sodom, Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Then Abraham drew near and said: "Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous people in the city; would you really sweep away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people within it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to kill the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike! Far be it from you! Should not the judge of all the world do what is just?" The LORD replied: If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake. Abraham spoke up again: "See how I am presuming to speak to my Lord, though I am only dust and ashes! What if there are five less than fifty righteous people? Will you destroy the whole city because of those five?" I will not destroy it, he answered, if I find forty-five there. But Abraham persisted, saying, "What if only forty are found there?" He replied: I will refrain from doing it for the sake of the forty. Then he said, "Do not let my Lord be angry if I go on. What if only thirty are found there?" He replied: I will refrain from doing it if I can find thirty there. Abraham went on, "Since I have thus presumed to speak to my Lord, what if there are no more than twenty?" I will not destroy it, he answered, for the sake of the twenty. But he persisted: "Please, do not let my Lord be angry if I speak up this last time. What if ten are found there?" For the sake of the ten, he replied, I will not destroy it.

3. Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

4. James 1:19-20

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1088

"To accomplish so great a work" - the dispensation or communication of his work of salvation - "Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,' but especially in the Eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptizes, it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Lastly, he is present when the Church prays and sings, for he has promised 'where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.'"

2. Paragraph 2839

With bold confidence, we began praying to our Father. In begging him that his name be hallowed, we were in fact asking him that we ourselves might be always made more holy. But though we are clothed with the baptismal garment, we do not cease to sin, to turn away from God. Now, in this new petition, we return to him like the prodigal son and, like the tax collector, recognize that we are sinners before him. Our petition begins with a "confession" of our wretchedness and his mercy. Our hope is firm because, in his Son, "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." We find the efficacious and undoubted sign of his forgiveness in the sacraments of his Church.

Small Group Questions

1. Think about a situation you have been in lately and note if you have stopped to listen for God or if you are simply choosing what you think is best to do?
2. After the discussion above share your thoughts on the possibility you may not like what God wants you to do.
3. Have you experienced God talking to you in deep prayer or even just quiet time? Share how that happens, how you get there, how it changes you.
4. Do you talk to God on an everyday basis? Is it formal or informal?
5. Does God speak to you through others? Through their words or actions?
6. Do you put God on a time table and if you don't get the answer you want you simply shut God Down?

Recommended Resources

1. Listening and Talking to God
<http://robertwells.tripod.com/listeningtogod.html>
2. [How to Listen to What God Wants from Me ... - Catholic Online](http://www.catholic.org/featured/headline.php?ID=1185)
www.catholic.org/featured/headline.php?ID=1185

Book: How to Listen When God Is Speaking: A Guide for Modern-Day Catholics [Paperback]

[Mitch Pacwa](#)

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start thinking of various ways we can let God guide our lives. Take steps to ask God what God wants you to do – NO MATTER WHAT
2. Commit to one action you will make to talk and/or listen to God and share your experience next week.
3. Is God talking to others through you? Can you make yourself more aware of opportunities to open another's life to God through yourself?

Author(s)

Dan Lape – Update

Graham Galloway and Steve Green – Previous work

Included Resources

By Fr. Jonas Abib
Founder Cancao Nova
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The important thing is always to practice listening to God. You do not listen to Him with your ear but with your heart.

Listening to God is embracing God's inspirations in your heart. God's answers us in your heart, in our deepest inmost core where He dwells. If you want an answer from God, look for it deep inside yourself. You should learn to plunge into the temple of your heart and look for your answers there.

It is something that cannot be done externally, amidst noise and lots of activity; it is something that cannot be done in your head. We often try to decide things in our mind, know everything in our conscious mind. Though what we really need is to plunge into our hearts and search for an answer in deep prayer.

We all know the benefits of prayer, especially prayer in tongues, followed by deep silence. In fact, what you experience is not a real silence, an empty silence: on the contrary, it is a silence of plenitude, a pleasant silence, a silence through which you plunge into your own self.

It is something like plunging into the depths of your own spiritual oceans in a sea-probe, going deep down inside yourself and entering that place inside you where God dwells. That is the place where God gives you the seeds for the answers of everything you ask Him.

It is a question of learning how to listen to God.

You listen to Him not with your ears but with the wisdom He inspires you in the recesses of your praying heart.

<http://robertwells.tripod.com/listeningtogod.html>

TALKING AND LISTENING TO GOD (Partial)

Talking to God

We talk to God in order to constantly build and strengthen our relationship with him, to get to know him better, to learn what he expects of us, what we can expect from him, and to find out how we can best accomplish the things that he wants us to do. We also talk to God in order to seek his advice and help, to show him that we recognize his existence and awesome power, and of course to show him that we have trust and confidence in him.

And talking to God should be the same as if you were talking to your best friend. You should tell him your thoughts, desires, hurts, and problems, as well as giving him your thanks and praise. Talking to God not only tells God that you have knowledge of him but that you also have faith in him. Talking to God also tells him that you have a desire for his presence in your life and that you need him and are dependent on him. It also shows God and that you want to be obedient to him. He wants to hear these things from you. He already knows what they are but he wants you to tell them to him. He wants you to make the effort to talk to him and not to take him for granted.

If you really want to communicate and talk to God, if you want to become close to him, if you want to begin to grow strong spiritually, and if you want to begin a glorious and meaningful relationship with him, then do two things.

1) Talk to God daily, in a normal everyday type of conversation. Remember that God can read your mind and that he is constantly observing your inner most thoughts at all times, so he knows what is going on in your heart and your mind far better than you do. So your conversations with God do not have to be vocal and you can mentally talk to God anytime you want. God gave us little taste of his ability to search the hearts of men and read their minds back in Jeremiah 17:10 when he said, "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds." So you can easily talk to God in your thoughts, and these conversations can be done anytime or anyplace. They can be done in school, at work, or at any other place, even if the rules of the world are against it.

2) The second thing you need to do in order to better communicate with Jesus is to read the Word of God each and every day. The Bible was the one thing that Jesus left for each one of us to read and study so that we would be able to find out about God. Only by reading the very word of God can we hope to draw near to him.

When Our Lord sees that you are taking the time to read his word every single day then what he is going to do is begin to peel away the layers of cloudiness that are covering your eyes and that hide the truth. Once he sees that you are serious about reading his word, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit will begin to open your eyes and mind, and allow you to begin to understand the Word of God and the incredible meaning that it has on every aspect of your life. It won't be long before you realize that the Bible isn't difficult at all to read and understand, and to your amazement you will begin to also realize that you and Jesus have been drawn closer together. Suddenly you will know that indeed he is communicating with you.

It is really a joyous occasion to see a believer who has devoted the time to talk to God and to read his word daily, suddenly realize just how much God is speaking to them. The true believer takes great comfort in knowing that Jesus Christ is constantly talking to them, directing them, guiding them, and teaching them throughout each and every day.

Also keep in mind that the way you talk to God is extremely important. Do you talk to him only when you are in trouble and need help? If so then it shows God that you are simply taking him for granted. However if he sees that you are setting aside certain periods of time during each day just to talk to him, then what you are doing is opening up the channels of communication between you and God.

We are living in a world that rarely thinks about Jesus and seldom talks to him, and if Jesus sees one person out of a million who is actually taking the time each and every day just to talk to him, then you are going to put great joy in his heart. Just think of it. The creator of the entire universe will be personally listening to you each and every time you talk to him.

Talking and Listening to God

He may watch for a while to see if what you are doing is only temporary and whether or not you will stop it after a few days. But if you continue, then God is going to be extremely pleased and I believe he won't be able to wait to begin to communicate with your heart, your conscience, your soul, your spirit. In fact you will not believe how much God will be talking to you.

Listening to God

Listening to God is probably the most important thing that will ever happen to a person. In fact your entire eternal future is based on you hearing God speaking to you and whether or not you listen to him. And this is because your spiritual life doesn't begin until God speaks to you and you finally decide to listen. This is so beautifully described in **John 10:27-28**. "**My sheep hear My voice**, and I know them, **and they follow Me**. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand".

It is for this reason that you need to not only talk to God constantly about everything, but you must also listen for God to speak to you. And the best way to listen for God to speak to you is to look to your heart and your mind for his answer. Most people expect God to answer them in some divine way or somehow speak to them verbally, right out of the heavens, but that isn't the way God operates. God speaks to a person's heart. To their mind. To their sense of moral righteousness and fairness. To their sense of what is right and Godly. When Jesus Christ is dwelling within a person he is communicating constantly with that person's heart, conscience, soul, and spirit. His answer may even be in that certain feeling that you have. That unexpected feeling that came out of nowhere and that shines additional light on the problem. His answer may lie in that sudden pause that you experience. That pause that gets you thinking about a different path to take.

And those methods of communication that God uses are extremely loud and clear. The true child of God can hear God speak just as clearly as if God was standing right alongside of them and verbally talking to them. However for most people, especially in the beginning, they need to be quiet and really listen for God's answer because it is so very easy to block his answer out. You can get busy watching a TV program or cleaning the house and you never really hear his side of the conversation.

It's amazing, but a true child of God is carrying on a constant two way conversation with God all day long. This is why talking and listening to God is so easy. It's like listening to music. That's why if your driving down the street going 30 miles over the speed limit, you know that's the voice of God telling you that you are wrong and that you must get back to the proper speed limit. That speeding is against the law, that you very possibly might hurt or kill another person, that you will be stopped by the police and given an expensive ticket, that your insurance rates will go up, or any number of other reasons. (You know it's not satan talking to you because if it was satan he would be telling you to go faster, that a little extra speed doesn't matter, that the other drivers owe you, or that it is ok for you to speed because you are in a hurry).

Another example might be if you are at work and you see something that you would like to have at home, and you suddenly begin to think that your employer will never miss it, and that it really isn't that expensive. Well, that's God speaking to your entire being through your conscience. He's pleading with your heart not to steal that item. He's telling your mind that it will only bring dishonor and guilt upon you and upon God. He telling your moral righteousness that it is very wrong, and that nothing good can ever happen when you steal from another.

After a while God is carrying on a conversation with you even while you are talking to other people; and you are tuned in to God just as much as you are to the other person. When was the last time you and another person were talking and that person used the name of God in vain. Did your **mind** not hear the Lord cut into that conversation and instantly begin to tell you that the conversation was wrong. That it is wrong to be around someone dragging his Father's name through the dirt? Or how about the time when you were talking with another person and one of you happened to mention vicious gossip about another person. Didn't your **heart** hear God tell you that it wasn't right to gossip? Did you feel that gentle warning letting you know that you were traveling out of God's camp and into an area that is owned and ruled by satan. That was God simply talking to you. And it will be one of the most glorious days of your life when you finally realize that you can conduct a constant two way conversation with God 24 hours a day.

Also a great many people love to say that God works in mysterious ways. That they have absolutely no idea how or why God does what he does. But for the true believer, God's ways aren't mysterious. His ways aren't concealed behind smoke and mirrors. It is just the opposite. Because once you begin to understand Jesus Christ, once you begin to learn what he is all about, once you begin to understand what he is trying to do in this world and in your life, once you begin to understand the tremendous importance that he holds for all of

mankind, then his actions will not be mysterious. That's when his ways will become crystal clear. In fact many times you will actually be able to predict what he is going to do.

The believer, who has surrendered his life up to Jesus Christ, will see God actively working in their daily lives. But this seeing will not be a visual image focused in our eyes. Instead, God has allowed his children to see him through his faithfulness, his blessings, his guidance, his encouragement. Our very spirits tell us that he is very near to us. Do we not see him by the feeling of peace and calm that his very presence brings? Do we not see God through the daily provisions that he brings for our many needs? We see God when he is carrying our burdens, when he is lighting our paths, and when he is nestling us in his arms. The believer that has surrendered, is able to see God all day long.

Disciplining Your Children: Love in Action

Summary

Did you know the experts (American Mental Health Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Physicians) have established guidelines regarding child discipline? Their recommendations are a good place to start our discussion of “Is there a ‘best’ way to correct children’s behavior?” Please join us as we travel from “Old School” to New Age” to explore options to make us more effective and aware parents.

Objective

Discipline is the process of teaching your child acceptable versus non-acceptable behavior (follow the rules). Discipline may involve punishment (time-out) or more importantly, rewards. Effective techniques aren’t about physical punishments. Most of the time they are more about treating children like adults, making them understand the gravity of the situation, and leading by example. The AAFP recommends several ways of shaping behavior: 1. positive reinforcement (focus on good behavior) 2. redirecting 3. verbal instruction/explanation 4. time-outs 5. re-explain expectations until compliance 6. grounding and 7. withholding privileges. Their charts indicate at what age these strategies work and when they are non productive (see Dr. Phil.com).

The American Mental Health Association says that being authoritative is the best parenting style. This parent sets clear expectations and consequences and is affectionate toward his or her child. The authoritative parent allows for flexibility and collaborative problem solving with the child when dealing with behavioral challenges. Corporal punishment is not recommended because there is no proof it works and has several negative consequences. Tips they recommend are:

1. Guide your discipline techniques to fit well with your child's temperament.
2. Communicate your discipline plan
3. Be respectful of your child
4. Be consistent
5. When it’s done its done (for both parent and child)
6. Understand what is appropriate for your child’s development
7. Look for the why behind behaviors. This doesn’t excuse behavior, but it can help prevent reoccurrence
8. Admit your mistakes
9. Realize some days will be challenges. If the situation becomes dangerous or intolerable, seek professional help (see webmd.com)

No discussion would be complete without considering the concept of positive discipline. This approach does not use any form of punishment. It is about loving guidance as opposed to threats and punishment. It is based on minimizing the child's frustrations and misbehavior rather than giving punishments. The foundation of this style of discipline is encouraging children to feel good about themselves and building the parent's relationship with the child so the child wants to please the parent. To achieve this, children

need some time with parents every day that they can enjoy and feel good about. Children recognize a parent's love through the time spent with them. Discipline and teaching work best within such positive relationships. Other important aspects are reasonable and age-appropriate expectations, feeding healthy foods and providing enough rest, giving clear instructions which may need to be repeated, looking for the causes of any misbehavior and making adjustments, and building routines. Children are helped by knowing what is happening in their lives. Having some predictability about their day without necessarily being regimental will help reduce frustration and misbehavior.

Some parents feel that positive parenting and non-punitive discipline is too permissive and will lead to unruly and disrespectful children. They also argue that there is no recourse for parents of misbehaving children to effectively control their misbehavior. Deliberate misbehavior, they say, must be firmly punished to prevent its recurrence.

Proponents of non-punitive discipline argue that children who misbehave often do it not out of malice, but out of ignorance, boredom or frustration, and simply need to be taught, listened to, or redirected. They argue that a close and loving relationship is vital and if there is such a relationship, the child will want to please the parent and will better accept rules and listen to reason. They also feel that punishments and smacks weaken the relationship which will lead to more problem behavior.

Bible Readings

1. Hebrews 12 7-11

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

2. Ephesians 6 4

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Catechism Readings

1. Section 2223

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones." Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them:

Small Group Questions

1. Is there anything you can take home and use for child discipline in your family?
2. Is child discipline a life long obligation? How does it mix with unconditional love of a child?

3. Corporal punishment is outlawed in 24 countries (Europe and Latin America) but is legal in all 50 States of the Union. Are there situations when it is necessary?
4. Is positive discipline a possibility with a large family? Is it unrealistic?

Recommended Resources

All resources were found by internet searching

1. Dr.Phil.com/advice/parenting
Many related links listed on site (AAPF Guidelines Charts)
2. Catholic Parenting Website
<http://www.angelfire.com/hi3/catholichomeschool/parent.html>
3. AMHA Guidelines
www.webmd.com/parenting/guide/discipline-tactics
4. The do's and don'ts of child discipline
www.come-over.to/fasstar/kersey.htm
5. History and Positive Discipline Description
www.wikipedia.org/childdiscipline
6. Five Principles of Discipline
<http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=136>

Accountability

1. Are you willing to briefly tell your small group partners one thing you did differently regarding child discipline next week? What were the results?
2. Did you discuss with your wife how you will handle discipline for the children?

Author(s)

Kevin McDonough / Reid Rooney

Divorce – Is Your Marriage at Risk?

Summary

Divorce is a reality for almost 50% of all couples, is your marriage at risk? Do you know the warning signs, the key life changes that stress marriages, what can you do to assess and address your risk.

Objective

Divorce is a reality for many couples that forever change the lives of the husband, wife, children and all the extended family and friends. Catholics are not immune to this and divorce also creates an issue of being able to fully take part in all parts of the Catholic faith.

We have interviewed 4 Father's Team men (all Catholic) who have either gone through, or are going through divorce now to get some idea of what were some of the potential issues, what the men wished they could have done differently, and what they would like to have heard 2-3 years before the divorce (from a Father's Team Meeting) that would have helped them do more to preserve the marriage.

Some of the men realize that it was really the right thing for the couple to separate, and some thought they (and their spouse) could have done more to keep the marriage together.

However, some of things that we as a Father's Team should discuss in this topic are:

1. Communication – what kind of discussions are you having at home?
 - a. Are your conversations only about discussing logistics of kid sports and 'what goes on the shopping list'?
 - b. Instead, can you name your wives 3 best friends and confidants?
 - c. Do you know the dreams and aspirations of your wife?
 - d. Are you telling your female co-workers more about your life than your wife?
2. How did your marriage start?
 - a. Some of the men realized (too late) that 'maybe' their wives got married for the wrong reason.
 - b. Some women are running 'away' from a situation (i.e. home life) and not running 'toward' something (you). Realistically, it is too late for all of us to revisit this – but again getting back to communication – do you know enough the history of your marriage – have you talked about it?
 - c. This is also a great topic to be talking to our kids who are considering marriage – can you coach your kids to really understand these dynamics?
3. Life Stage impact on our marriage – are you paying attention?
 - a. Some of the men interviewed started having issues – or were told their wives wanted a divorce – when the youngest child was going off to school full time.
 - b. When the youngest is 7 years old, the couples were married from 15-20 years and all of a sudden the wife's primary role as 'mom' was diminished – at the same time that the man is 'hitting his stride' from a career standpoint.
 - c. Have you talked about 'her' role when the heavy lifting of child care slows down?

- d. Are you hitting your stride in your career, with lots of late nights, lots of travel, promotions, and business dinners? Are you missing a critical life stage opportunity to talk?

These questions should be a topic for the men of the Father's Team and we should all examine the health of our marriage.

Some of the other ideas volunteered by the men (besides the topics above) were:

1. Do you talk enough about meaningful things?
2. Do you pray together?
3. If you are having issues – have you addressed? Did you consider a priest, our deacons, marriage counseling?
4. There are techniques that can be used to change the negative dynamics into positive communication – would you be interested in learning new techniques (one of our Father's may be teaching this).
5. One of the men said in hindsight he would have – cuddled more, talked more about his day and asked her about hers, really kiss her every day, more time with her and less with kids, ask for more feedback, learn to dance, tell her I am proud of her, smile more and savor her eyes.

Bible Readings

1. Ephesians 5:25-28

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So [also] husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

2. Deuteronomy 24:5

'If a man is newly married, he must not join the army, nor must he be pestered at home; he must be left at home, free of all obligations for one year, to make his new wife happy.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2385

Divorce is immoral also because it introduces disorder into the family and into society. This disorder brings grave harm to the deserted spouse, to children traumatized by the separation of their parents and often torn between them, and because of its contagious effect which makes it truly a plague on society.

2. Paragraph 2386

It can happen that one of the spouses is the innocent victim of a divorce decreed by civil law; this spouse therefore has not contravened the moral law. There is a considerable difference between a spouse who has sincerely tried to be faithful to the sacrament of marriage and is unjustly abandoned, and one who through his own grave fault destroys a canonically valid marriage.

Small Group Questions

1. Do you see yourself in any of the 3 situations mentioned?

2. Have you considered a serious conversation – are you brave enough to address with your wife?
3. Could your wife be asking you for a divorce tomorrow, next week? Would you see it coming?

Recommended Resources

1. Pre-discussion with Rich DelCore and potentially engage some of the Father's interviewed.

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start...
 - a. A discussion with your wife
 - b. Examine your behaviors today

Author(s)

Rich DelCore

Religion in the Media

Summary

Religion in the media... How is it portrayed? Do you think it is accurate? Are there any good places to get the truth in the media about religion? If so, where?

Objective

Scan your favorite newspaper or search your favorite news website on any given day and you will find news about religion. Turn on your TV or scan your radio and you will surely come across news and shows about religion. Is the message positive? Is it negative? Are the sound bytes we hear an accurate portrayal about religion this day in age? Are there good places to visit to get your daily dose of religion in the media?

Bible Readings

1. Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

2. Luke 11:34

Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness.

3. Psalm 101:3-4

I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.

4. James 3:5-11

So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ...

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2494

The information provided by the media is at the service of the common good.²⁸⁵ Society has a right to information based on truth, freedom, justice, and solidarity:

The proper exercise of this right demands that the content of the communication be true and - within the limits set by justice and charity - complete. Further, it should be communicated honestly and properly. This means that in the gathering and in the publication of news, the moral law and the legitimate rights and dignity of man should be upheld.²⁸⁶

2. Paragraph 2497

By the very nature of their profession, journalists have an obligation to serve the truth and not offend against charity in disseminating information. They should strive to respect, with equal care, the nature of the facts and the limits of critical judgment concerning individuals. They should not stoop to defamation.

Small Group Questions

1. What are you hearing about religion every day as you go about your life?
2. What media outlets do you visit to get your media about religion?

Recommend Resources

1. <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1905/religion-news-media-2010-islam-mosque-ground-zero>
2. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/06/religion-stories-of-2011- n_1131566.html
3. <http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/index>

Accountability

1. This week try getting your news about religion in one of the places that the group suggested. Try it out and see if you like it.

Supporting Aging Parents

Summary

As children, our parents made decisions for us, and provided us guidance. When we become adults and parents, our parents become peers and mentors as we raise our own family. As our parents reach old age, they begin to depend on us to give guidance, support, and understanding. This session seeks to explore issues that our parents may be experiencing, how we are engaged and affected, and share ideas and experiences of how to help our parents deal with the challenges, and enjoy their old age as best they can.

Objective

Growing old can be fun and it beats the alternative – early death. However as our parents grow old things change and can cause huge burdens on their daily lives. Perhaps a spouse has died and the remaining parent has to deal with loneliness, new challenges like balancing the checkbook when the other handled finances, or finding people that can relate to their stage in life.

Alternatively, perhaps both parents are still alive, but one requires care from sickness like surgery, Alzheimer's, or just sedentary ways. It might be easy for us to ship them off to a retirement home and have others deal with them, or you might experience deep guilt in not being able to deal with a parent's need without external help.

Could you take your father's car keys away and tell him he can't drive anymore? Could you tell your mother she has to move out of her home of 30 years or more because she can't keep up?

How do you and your wife team up with family and friends to support your parents needs when they can't handle everything they used to? Discuss ways to preserve your parent's dignity while helping them through their aging and "Golden Years".

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 25:31-40

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

2. Leviticus 19:32

Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the old, and fear your God. I am the LORD.

3. Proverbs 10:1

A wise son gives his father joy, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2251

Children owe their parents respect, gratitude, just obedience, and assistance. Filial respect fosters harmony in all of family life.

Small Group Questions

1. Are you in a situation where your parents need your assistance: financially, daily care giving, illness recovery, disability? How do you help them?
2. If your parents are younger, do you keep a close relationship to them so that later in life that closeness will keep you together?
3. Did you or your family do anything proactively to help your parents?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.agingcare.com/>
2. <http://elderhelpers.org/blog/> - blog with some interesting ideas
3. <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/the-best-life/2011/07/18/10-tips-for-caring-for-aging-parents> - financial resources focused
4. http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2005-07-13-alzheimers-caregivers_x.htm

Accountability

1. Make a family care giving plan today: <http://foundation.aarp.org/Caregiving/?gclid=Cl-c18m7mbECFQIQNAodmCWDhA>
2. Take a small step, make an effort to see your parents – or talk to them, more often. Don't make it awkward when they really need you.
3. Take the bigger step and ask your parents how they are doing and how you can help.

Author(s)

Dan Lape

Included Resources

Caring for elderly parents catches many unprepared.

<http://www.usatoday.com/money/perfi/basics/story/2012-03-25/caring-for-an-elderly-parent-financially/53775004/1>

Last July, Julie Baldocchi's mother had a massive stroke and was paralyzed. Baldocchi suddenly had to become a family caregiver, something that she wasn't prepared for.

"I was flying by the seat of my pants," says Baldocchi, an employment specialist in San Francisco. Both of her parents are 83, and she knew her father couldn't handle her mother's care.

The hospital recommended putting her mother in a nursing home. Baldocchi wasn't willing to do that. But moving her back into her parents' home created other problems.

Baldocchi, 48, is married and lives about a mile away from her parents. She has a full-time job and has back problems that make it difficult for her to lift her mother. "I couldn't do it all," she says. "But I didn't even know how to find help."

With help from the Family Caregiver Alliance, she eventually hired a live-in caregiver. "But even if you plan intellectually and legally, you're never ready for the emotional impact," Baldocchi says. In the first two months after her mother's stroke, she lost about 30 pounds as stress mounted.

More than 42 million Americans provide family caregiving for an adult who needs help with daily activities, according to a 2009 survey by the AARP. An additional 61.6 million provided at least some care during the year.

And many are unprepared.

Starting with the paperwork

While many parents lack an advance care directive, it's the most basic and important step they can take. The directive includes several parts, including: a durable power of attorney, which gives someone legal authority to make financial decisions on another's behalf; a health care proxy, which is similar to the power of attorney, except it allows someone to make decisions regarding medical treatment; and a living will that outlines instructions for end-of-life care. (For example, parents can say if they want to be kept alive by artificial measures.)

"It's invaluable for the kids, because it's hard to make those decisions for a parent," says Jennifer Cona, an elder-law attorney at Genser Dubow Genser & Cona in Melville, N.Y.

An advance care directive is the first line of defense if a situation arises, says Kathleen Kelly, executive director of the Family Caregiver Alliance, which supports and educates caregivers.

Without an advance directive, the family will have to petition the court to be appointed the parent's legal guardian, says AgingCare.com.

It's important for families to talk about long-term care so the adult children know their parents' preferences, wishes and goals, says Lynn Feinberg, a caregiving expert at AARP. But it's not an easy conversation.

Elderly parents are sometimes suspicious of their children's financial motives, says Susan John, a financial planner at Financial Focus in Wolfeboro, N.H. One client asked John to hold a family meeting because they needed an intermediary to talk about financial issues, she says.

And when there are many siblings, the family decisions can become a three-ring circus with much acrimony, says Ann-Margaret Carrozza, an elder-law attorney in Glen Cove, N.Y.

Families who need information and help sorting out disagreements can call on elder-law attorneys, financial planners, geriatric care managers and caregiver support groups. In February, AARP said it will offer its members a new caregiving support service through financial services firm Genworth.

Navigating the long-term care system

Many families are unprepared for quick decisions, especially when they find out that Medicare doesn't pay for long-term care, Feinberg says.

The median cost of a year in a private room at a nursing home in 2011 was \$77,745, according to Genworth. And only those who have spent most of their assets can qualify for Medicaid to pay for the nursing home.

Assisted living is another option. Residents can have their own apartment to maintain some independence. But the facilities generally provide personal care services, such as meals, housekeeping and assistance with activities.

Still, it's not cheap: The national median cost in 2011 was \$39,135, according to Genworth. Assisted living isn't covered by Medicaid.

If they have a choice, at least 90% of elderly parents prefer to stay at home as long as they can, according to AARP research.

But if the parents can no longer safely live at home, it can be hard for children to move them into an adult care facility.

There may be another option. Sometimes the home can be modified so a parent can stay there. For example, Baldocchi put in a chair lift for her mother. She also arranged for a home caregiver.

The job of family caregivers

Family caregivers take over many responsibilities. One might manage a parent's finances, while another sibling will take the parent to doctors' appointments and shopping. Those who move in with a parent take on a significant and sustained burden of care.

Jan Walker moved into her mother's home in Leesburg, Fla. After her mother, who is 83, had fallen, she wasn't able to get around as well.

Walker, 55, has three brothers. But she is the only daughter, is divorced and has no children. "I always knew that this was the role that I would have, and I guess my mind was prepared for it," says Walker, who now is a full-time caregiver and works from home as a tutorial instructor for a digital scrapbooking website.

"When you get into the trenches, it's literally baptism by fire," she says. "New things come up. It's not just about advance planning for finances or medical care. It's everything," she says.

Caregivers need to also watch their own health. "There is such a thing as caregiver burnout," Cona says. Among female caregivers 50 and older, 20% reported symptoms of depression, according to a 2010 study on working caregivers by MetLife.

"It's a hard job," Walker says. "But most worthwhile things are hard. She was always there for me when I needed a helping hand. It's only natural that I be here for her now."

Technology that can Help the Elderly

<http://elderhelpers.org/blog/>

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While a lot of technology can simplify seniors' lives, it can also be intimidating to adopt for people growing up without the same technological innovations that we value today. Some technology gadgets for seniors are particularly popular such as:

Tablet PCs: Many technology companies like Microsoft, Apple and now Google have tablets out that have applications that seniors can enjoy like games, free limited newspaper access, internet surfing and videos.

E Readers: If the elder enjoys reading, but has difficulty seeing the text because of vision problems, E Readers are perfect for them. Some E Readers are designed for simplicity and have the ability to make the text any size so that vision is no longer a problem.

Wii: Video games systems like the Nintendo Wii give seniors the capability of enjoying the same sports that they did when it was safer for them to. The senior and their helper may enjoy activities like yoga, golf, tennis and bowling.

Cell Phones: For older seniors that still prefer the traditional land line telephone, think simple. There are many smartphones out that are unnecessarily complicated and can frustrate seniors when attempting to use them. Pay as you go phones are usually very simple, older models can be easier to use than the newer models.

It does not take very much training to use these devices; today's technologically savvy youth may be able to give the seniors a thorough overview over any of these electronics. If you would like to find a volunteer to help seniors to use these devices, search for volunteers in your area and sign up.

Empty Nesting – How do you deal with the children moving on?

Summary

Have your children all gone off to college or moved away for a new career? Perhaps you're a stay at home parent and you're sending your last one off to all day school. Changes to the household can be a big change for a parent. You may be spending more time with just the two of you, or have a lot of time alone. How do you prepare yourself for these life changes?

Objective

A lot of the older fathers on the team have experienced or will soon experience an empty house from children going off to college or moving away for work. This can present some wonderful opportunities for you and your wife to get closer. It can also present an awkward silence in the house, bored spouse, and conflict. How do you prepare yourself for a different life-style when you're so used to being a parent and all that it entails when children are around?

Fathers team has a lot of younger fathers as well, who may be bored by a session dominated by older fathers talking about something they're far from relating to. However, younger fathers can experience the same issues when all of the children are finally off to school and a stay at home parent is alone for much of the day. Sometimes that's a blessing! Sometimes that can present a change for one of the parents that we have to deal with.

Use this session to discuss both "empty nesting" and major changes at home related to these life changes.

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 19:13-15

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." After he placed his hands on them, he went away.

2. Matthew 19:23-30

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible." Then Peter said to him in reply, "We have given up everything and followed you. What will there be for us?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you that you who have followed me, in the new age, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will yourselves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

3. Mark 10:6-9

But from the beginning of creation, '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 flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2223

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones."³¹ Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them:

He who loves his son will not spare the rod. . . . He who disciplines his son will profit by him.³²

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.³³

2. Paragraph 2230

When they become adults, children have the right and duty to choose their profession and state of life. They should assume their new responsibilities within a trusting relationship with their parents, willingly asking and receiving their advice and counsel. Parents should be careful not to exert pressure on their children either in the choice of a profession or in that of a spouse. This necessary restraint does not prevent them - quite the contrary from giving their children judicious advice, particularly when they are planning to start a family.

Small Group Questions

1. Have you experienced an empty nest from children going off to college or moving away? How did you deal with it? Was it a positive or negative experience?
2. Are you in touch with your wife enough to deal with family changes?
3. Have you experience the last child off to all day school and the changes that brings?
4. Are there other major changes in your family life that have led to you and your wife needing to adapt and grow?

Accountability

1. If you have older children, start thinking about how you and your wife will deal with the changes.
2. If you have a stay at home parent, how can you prepare for the last child off to all day school?

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Included Resources

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/empty-nest-syndrome/MY01976/>

Empty nest syndrome: Tips for coping

If your last child is all grown up and about to leave home — or he or she has already moved out — you might be experiencing some mixed emotions. Understand why empty nest syndrome happens and what you can do about it.

What's empty nest syndrome and why do some parents experience it?

Empty nest syndrome isn't a clinical diagnosis. Instead, empty nest syndrome is a phenomenon in which parents experience feelings of sadness and loss when the last child leaves home.

Although you might actively encourage your children to become independent, the experience of letting go can be painful. You might find it difficult to suddenly have no children at home who need your care. You might miss being a part of your children's daily lives — as well as the constant companionship. You might

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also worry intensely about your children's safety and whether they'll be able to take care of themselves on their own. You might struggle with the transition if your last child leaves the nest a little earlier or later than you expected — or at a time different from when you did. If you have only one child or strongly identify with your role as parent, you might have a particularly difficult time adjusting to an empty nest.

What's the impact of empty nest syndrome?

In the past, research suggested that parents dealing with empty nest syndrome experienced a profound sense of loss that might make them vulnerable to depression, alcoholism, identity crisis and marital conflicts.

However, recent studies suggest that an empty nest can also provide parents with many benefits. When the last child leaves home, parents have a new opportunity to reconnect with each other, improve the quality of their marriage and rekindle interests for which they previously might not have had time.

How can I cope with empty nest syndrome?

If you're experiencing feelings of loss due to empty nest syndrome, take action. For example:

Accept the timing. Avoid comparing your child's timetable to your own personal experience. Instead, focus on what you can do to help your child succeed when he or she does leave home. Keep in touch. You can continue to be close to your children even when you live apart. Make an effort to maintain regular contact through visits, phone calls, emails, texts or video chats. Seek support. If you're having a difficult time dealing with an empty nest, lean on loved ones and other close contacts for support. Share your feelings. If you feel depressed, consult your doctor or a mental health provider. Stay positive. Thinking about the extra time and energy you might have to devote to your marriage or personal interests after your last child leaves home might help you adapt to this major life change. Can I prevent empty nest syndrome?

If your last child is about to leave home and you're worried about empty nest syndrome, plan ahead. Look for new opportunities in your personal and professional life. Keeping busy or taking on new challenges at work or at home can help ease the sense of loss that your child's departure might cause.

<http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/wiley031/00009169.pdf>

RESURVEYING EMPTY NEST ISSUES

Issues and problems in marriage cause you neither success nor failure; it's how you deal with them that makes a difference, especially in the empty nest. When you are no longer meeting the demands of active parenting, issues will resurface and perhaps loom larger on the landscape of your marriage. So what are those major issues you'll take with you into the empty nest?

Consider the top ten issues in an empty nest survey taken, number one being the most severe problem area, number two, the next most severe problem, and so on:

Top Issues in the Empty Nest Years

1. Conflict
2. Communication
3. Sex
4. Health
5. Fun
6. Recreation
7. Money
8. Aging parents
9. Retirement planning
10. Children

The top three issues in the empty nest—conflict, communication, and sex—are also among the major problem areas for younger couples. People take their issues along as they transition through the different seasons of a marriage. We observed no overall gender differences that were very strong. However, females tended to

say communication was more of a problem than did males, and males tended to say that sex was more of a problem than females reported. (Are you surprised?)

At this stage of life, money issues are not rated as high as for younger couples, but health issues are rated higher. The fact that fun and recreation are rated so high indicates that perhaps couples are having trouble figuring out what to do together that's enjoyable for both or finding fun things that both will take time out for. For years their shared recreational activities may have been centered around their children, and now they don't know what to do to have fun together.

How would you rank these issues in your marriage? Think about your relationship: with which issues do you struggle the most?