

Chapter 6

Transitions, Challenges, and Rewards of Married Life

Getting Started

Assign the students to read Chapter 6, "Transitions, Challenges, and Rewards of Married Life." Use the following questions from the Student Text to guide a discussion of the chapter:

- What do you perceive to be the greatest challenges to marriage in today's American society?
- When should career choices come first in married life? When should the family take precedence?
- Name several ways the popular American media and culture has affected your understanding of marriage.
- How has divorce affected your life or the life of a close friend?
- Describe a family that has been an inspiration to you because of their faith during a difficult situation.

(See the Student Text for additional questions.) Then ask the students to read the following article.

Application Reading

<http://www.catholic.org/hf/marriage/story.php?id=18739>

THERAPIST TO COUPLES: MARRIAGE NO PICNIC BUT WORTH EFFORT

By Patricia Bartos

Catholic News Service

FRANKLIN PARK, Pa. -- "Our culture has really done a magnificent job of convincing people that good marriages 'just happen,'" according to marriage and family therapist Larry Badaczewski.

Many experts caution against this romantic, magical view of marriage, "but somehow we have got it in our heads that it shouldn't be that hard," he said. "It's almost as if we refuse to see how complex we are as individuals, and that when you take two imperfect people and have them live together, you still somehow expect them to have a perfect life."

Discussion

Lead the students in a discussion of the following questions:

1. According to family therapist Larry Badaczewski, why is it impossible for good marriages to "just happen"? What are some of the challenging issues that most married couples face? Marriages don't "just happen" because they consist of two complex, imperfect people living together. Some of the issues that married couples can expect to face include money, sex, parenting, social life, extended family relationships, division of labor in the household, and how they practice the faith.
2. What causes many marriages to go bad, according to Badaczewski? If couples expect marriage to be easy, then when they encounter difficulties they may begin blaming the other person.
3. God can be revealed in the happiness and joy of a married couple, but how else does Badaczewski propose that God may be revealed in a marriage? God is revealed in the pain and messiness of married life, especially when couples practice the love of Christ toward one another, rather than relying on shallow notions of romantic love.
4. Is there any advice from this article that you would want to bring to your own marriage? Why?

Activity

Ten Commandments of Good Relationships

- In this activity, students draw on their learning and their relationship experience to collaboratively develop a list of "Ten Commandments" for good relationships. At the end of the activity, the students consider the usefulness of such commandments for sustaining marriage.
- For this activity, the students will need paper and pencils.
- Begin by reviewing with the students the material from the textbook on the permanence of marriage. Note that although the lifelong commitment of marriage may seem challenging, most people get to practice for

that commitment in the relationships they have with friends and family members.

- Explain to the students that in this activity, they will draw on their personal experience with relationships as well as their learning in this course to develop a list of “Ten Commandments” for maintaining good relationships. This list will be their answer to the question, “What should people do (or not do) to maintain good relationships?” Emphasize that their “commandments” should reflect their own personal experiences, but also insights from the Catholic faith tradition that they have learned during this course. If necessary, offer a few examples of “commandments” implied by conventional wisdom: “Never end the day angry,” “Avoid accusatory statements during an argument,” “Do little things to show you care,” and so on.
- Instruct the students to begin by working alone to develop their own personal list of Ten Commandments for good relationships.
- As students finish their personal lists, have them gather in groups of three to four. (The first three people to finish form a group, and the next three people form a group, and so on.)
- Instruct the students to share their lists with the others in their group. When everyone has had an opportunity to share, the group should discuss the merits of the various ideas for maintaining good relationships, then choose the ten best ideas. During this sifting process, similar ideas may be combined into one commandment; also, the group may come up with completely new commandments as a result of their discussion. In the end, the group should have its own list of “Ten Commandments for Good Relationships.”
- As the groups discuss various ideas about how to sustain a good relationship, help them to keep on track by reminding them of some of the concepts mentioned or implied in the textbook and the supplementary article for this chapter. Also, encourage the groups not to “short-circuit” their discussion; remind them that they will be asked to explain their list to the large group.
- vWhen the groups have had adequate time to complete their lists, gather all the students together again. Have each group share its list; have each group explain the rationale behind one or two of its ideas. Then, repeat the sifting process. Which of the ideas about how to maintain good relationships seem most important or useful? Why?
- Conclude the activity by discussing the resulting list. How well might it apply to marriage relationships? What might need to be added, or changed? Does it include key concepts from the textbook? What virtues might be necessary to help people follow these commandments? Is it possible to maintain a vital relationship by just following a list of rules? What is the role of grace?

Additional Activities

- Have the students create posters about the meaning of love as described in assignment #4 in the Assignments and Applications section of the Student Textbook (page 193).
- Have the students spend some time in private prayer as described in “Prayer for the Vocation to the Married Life” on page 194 of the Student Textbook.
- Have the students role-play transitions that affect marriage as described in step #6 under the Teaching Approaches heading in the “Marriage Is a Lifelong Commitment” section of the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition.
- Lead the students in the prayer service described in step #4 under the Teaching Approaches heading in the “Chapter 6 Review” section of the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition.
- Have the students complete the “Promises to Keep” handout (Handout 37) found in the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition.
- Have the students complete the “Against the Dignity of Marriage” handout (Handout 39) found in the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition.

Additional Resources

For Internet resources, see the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition.