

THREE TO GET MARRIED

Marriage & Intimacy

Overview:

There is nothing more romantic than living your marriage with an attitude that is open to intimacy. Based on St. John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, the speakers will walk you through the Church's teaching about intimacy, some of the more common misconceptions in our culture, and what being open to intimacy means in our modern world.

◆ 4 Types of Intimacy

◆ Intellectual

◆ Spiritual

◆ Emotional

◆ Physical: sexual & non-sexual

The Strong Table



◆ Things to Remember...

- ◆ God wants you to have an integrated love life, one that includes an awesome sex life in your marriage.
- ◆ Satisfaction in the bedroom is directly related to development of all types of intimacy in your marriage.
- ◆ Two aspects of marriage: unitive and procreative.
- ◆ Responsible parenthood (see page 67 for more information).
- ◆ NFP is NOT Catholic birth control because it is not contraceptive, it does nothing to suppress or block conception. Instead, couples adjust their behavior according to their family planning intention (that is, whether they hope to achieve or avoid a pregnancy) using the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of a woman's menstrual cycle. When practiced well, NFP methods can help to enrich the intimacy bond between husband and wife. As holistic family planning that works with nature, the methods of NFP are acceptable for people of various religious and philosophical beliefs. You will learn more about NFP in the next talk, or refer to pages 73 – 78.

Keep Learning!

Books:

- Adam and Eve After The Pill by Mary Eberstadt (Ignatius Press, 2012)
- Challenge to Love by Mary Shivanandan, STD (KM Associates, 1979)
- The Christian Meaning of Human Sexuality by Paul M. Quay, SJ, PhD (Ignatius Press, 1985)
- For Better...Forever: A Catholic Guide to Lifelong Marriage by Gregory Popcak (Our Sunday Visitor, 1999)
- The Good News About Sex and Marriage by Christopher West (Servant, 2004)
- The Infertility Companion for Catholics: Spiritual and Practical Support for Couples, Angélique Ruhí-López and Carmen Santamaría (Ave María Press, 2012)
- Holy Sex!: A Catholic Guide to Toe-Curling, Mind-Blowing, Infallible Loving by Gregory K. Popcak
- Men, Women and the Mystery of Love: Practical Insights from John Paul II's Love and Responsibility by Edward Sri (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007)
- Pure Intimacy: How Your Marriage Can Benefit From NFP Paperback by Jason Evert
- Real Love: Answers to Your Questions On Dating, Marriage, and the Real Meaning of Sex by Mary Beth Bonnacci (Ignatius Press, 1996)
- Sex, God & Marriage by Johann Christoph Arnold and Mother Teresa (Plough Publishing House; Third Edition, 2014)
- The Splendor of Truth by John Paul II (St. Paul Books and Media, 1993)
- Theology of the Body Explained by Christopher West (Pauline Books and Media, 2003)
- Theology of the Body for Beginners by Christopher West (Ascension Press, 2004)
- The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality by John Paul II (St. Paul Books and Media, 1993)

Questions & Answers...

**Does the Church Teach That Birth Control Is Allowable In Certain Circumstances?
What Are Some Reasons That Justify Avoiding Pregnancy?
What Is Responsible Parenthood?**

A great resource for help understanding what the Church teaches about specific topics is a website called: [Catholic Answers.com](http://CatholicAnswers.com). Here are two questions they answered in their "Quick Questions" section.

QUESTION

My wife and I have been married since 1996. At that time the priest told us that, according to the Pope's teachings, under certain circumstances (economic if I remember correctly) the use of birth control was allowable. Is what the priest said correct?

ANSWER

If by "birth control" the priest meant contraception, then he was incorrect. Contraception is morally unacceptable. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains:

[E]very action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible is intrinsically evil. (CCC 2370)

On the other hand, regulation of births through moral means may be a necessary aspect of responsible parenthood:

For just reasons, spouses may wish to space the births of their children. It is their duty to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood.

Moreover, they should conform their behavior to the objective criteria of morality: "When it is a question of harmonizing married love with the responsible transmission of life, the morality of the behavior does not depend on sincere intention and evaluation of motives alone; but it must be determined by objective criteria, criteria drawn from the nature of the person and his acts, criteria that respect the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love; this is possible only if the virtue of married chastity is practiced with sincerity of heart." (CCC 2368)

ANSWER

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains, "A particular aspect of [the fecundity of marriage] concerns the regulation of

QUESTION

I have heard that it is acceptable to use NFP for avoiding pregnancy if the reason is serious. Could you please tell me what reasons justify avoiding pregnancy?

procreation. For just reasons, spouses may wish to space the births of their children" (CCC 2368). But the *Catechism* does not explicitly define what constitutes "just reasons." Instead, proper determination is left up to the couple: "It is their duty to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity

appropriate to responsible parenthood" (CCC 2368).

However, the language used in Church documents may be somewhat helpful. For example, *Gaudium et Spes* states,

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(Continued from page 67)

[C]ertain modern conditions often keep couples from arranging their married lives harmoniously, and . . . they find themselves in circumstances where at least temporarily the size of their families should not be increased. As a result, the faithful exercise of love and the full intimacy of their lives is hard to maintain. (GS 51)

Humanae Vitae says that a couple may morally space births if there are well-grounded reasons "arising from the physical or psychological condition of husband or wife, or from external circumstances" (HV 16).

Ultimately, each couple must determine for themselves whether "just reasons" truly exist. *Vademecum for Confessors Concerning Some Aspects of the Morality of Conjugal Life* explains, "Certainly it is a duty of married couples—who, for that matter, should seek appropriate counsel—to deliberate deeply and in a spirit of faith about the size of their family, and to decide the concrete mode of realizing it, with respect for the moral criteria of conjugal life" (2.3).

Parents should regard as their proper mission the task of transmitting human life and educating those to whom it has been transmitted. They should realize that they are thereby cooperators with the love of God the Creator, and are, so to speak, the interpreters of that love. Thus they will fulfill their

task with human and Christian responsibility, and, with docile reverence toward God, will make decisions by common counsel and effort. Let them thoughtfully take into account both their own welfare and that of their children, those already born and those which the future may bring. For this accounting they need to reckon with both the material and the spiritual conditions of the times as well as of their state in life. Finally, they should consult the interests of the family group, of temporal society, and of the Church herself. The parents themselves and no one else should ultimately make this judgment in the sight of God. But in their manner of acting, spouses should be aware that they cannot proceed arbitrarily, but must always be governed according to a conscience dutifully conformed to the divine law itself, and should be submissive toward the Church's teaching office, which authentically interprets that law in the light of the Gospel. That divine law reveals and protects the integral meaning of conjugal love, and impels it toward a truly human fulfillment. (GS 50)

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