

7th Grade: Marriage

OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVE:

To recognize the Church's teaching on marriage and divorce as originating from Jesus' words.

MAIN CONCEPTS:

God's plan for marriage from the beginning was the lifelong uniting of man and woman in life-giving love.

Since God has bound the husband and wife together, the Church cannot separate them.

The Church recognizes that separation and civil divorce is needed and encouraged at times for the safety and wellbeing of the family, though the spouses remain married.

PLANNING DIRECTIONS:

Choose the components you wish to use given the time you have and the needs of your students.

INTRODUCTION

2 min

Summarize today's theme.

Through these vocation units we hope to become familiar with the four kinds of vocations that God calls people to so that now and later in life you will be able to follow God's call to you. Today's focus is on the lifelong nature of marriage. Hopefully by the end of this class you will have a better understanding of what marriage is, and why it is lifelong, why separation is sometimes encouraged, and how marriage still remains. These are difficult topics, and some of it may be very close to your own experience. Let us trust in God's gentle love to guide us and strengthen our families.

MARRIAGE

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths." – PROVERBS 3:5-6

OPENING ACTIVITY

FRIEND STORIES

Think about your friends and some of the nice things they have done for you, big or small. Prepare to share with the rest of the class.



What makes a good friend?

ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

"Some Pharisees approached him, and tested him, saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?"

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?'

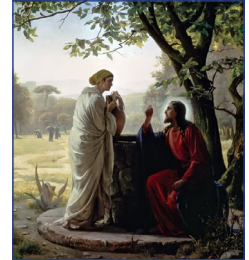
So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate."

They said to him, "Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss her?"

He said to them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." – Matthew 19:3-8

When Jesus said, "from the beginning it was not so," what do you think he meant? What was it like before anyone got divorced? Imagine what it was like when Adam and Eve were together in the garden before they ate of the forbidden fruit. Imagine the peace that they felt with each other – walking with God in the cool of the evening. Imagine the trust that they had with each other and the value that they gave to each other.

That is the friendship that marriage is supposed to be. Some marriages are like that. Husband and wife rely on each other, are friends, each contribute from their own gifts, and love each other such that they would lay down their life for each other. They honor each other in many small ways every day. But because of Original Sin, there is always some difficulty, and in some marriages, there is a lot of difficulty.



VOCATION LESSONS | 7th Grade: Marriage

1

OPENING PRAYER

2 min

Let us draw near to God during today's lesson.

Read aloud Proverbs 3:5-6.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths." – Proverbs 3:5-6

Pray a simple prayer from the heart or:

Lord, as we learn and discuss about marriage and divorce please send your Holy Spirit to guide our hearts and minds. We trust in your love for us no matter what our family situation. We know that your love is unconditional and that you died on the cross for us. Please give light to our minds so that we can see things from your perspective, and give us the ability to walk in your ways.

OPENING ACTIVITY

10 min

FRIEND STORIES

In learning about marriage, a reflection on true friendship can be our starting point because a good marriage has many of the same virtues that a good friendship does.

1. In a large group or small group, have students tell stories of something great a friend has done for you. (It can be big or little.)

Examples:

- I have a friend who builds model airplanes. They are complex and fragile but he lets me build them with him even though he has to go a lot slower and explain things more when I help him.
 - I have a friend who always compliments me after I get a haircut.
 - I have a friend who gave me half her lunch when I forgot to bring mine to school.
2. Together, list a few of the things that make a good friendship.

ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS

20 min

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

* *Note to teacher: Use your judgment as to whether your students are mature enough to delve into these themes.*

1. Read through the reading page individually, in small groups, or as a class.
2. Have the students discuss or write the reflection questions and any of their own.
3. Quiz the students a bit to see if they grasp the concepts. If it is helpful, refer to the Vocation Glossary found at www.vocation-lessons.com/glossary.

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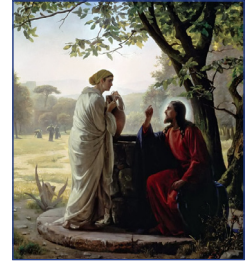
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MARRIAGE

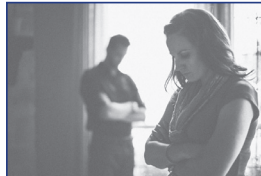
ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS *continued*

Here is part of a letter written by the United States Bishops to all Catholics about difficulty in marriage:

“Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan,” A Pastoral Letter of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2009

Conflict, quarrels, and misunderstandings can be found in all marriages. They reflect the impact of Original Sin, which disrupted the original communion of man and woman. They also reflect modern stresses upon marriage: the conflict between work and home, economic hardships, and social expectations.

Nevertheless, God’s plan for marriage persists, and he continues to offer mercy and healing grace. We bishops urge couples in crisis to turn to the Lord for help. We also



encourage them to make use of the many resources, including programs and ministries offered by the Church, that can help to save marriages, even those in serious difficulty.

We understand the pain of those for whom divorce seemed the only recourse. We urge them to make frequent use of the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation. We also offer encouragement to those who have divorced and remarried civilly. Although the Church cannot recognize such subsequent unions as valid marriages, she hopes that people in this situation will participate in parish life and attend the Sunday Eucharist, even without receiving the Sacrament.

So, although marriage lasts for life, the Church recognizes that there are situations where the spouses need to separate and, at times, legally divorce for monetary support reasons. However, they are still bound together spiritually in a marriage and can pray for each other and be true although separated.

Perhaps that is helpful to read, but some people might ask, “I still don’t understand. Why isn’t divorce allowed? Why does the Catholic Church teach that marriage is for life?”

Mary Beth Bonacci writes about this in part of her book *We’re On a Mission from God*:

It’s not just a tough “rule.” It’s not a rule at all: it’s just a description. All the Church is saying is that marriage isn’t just about two people. It’s about two people and God. In the

sacrament of marriage, God does more than change their names. He binds them together spiritually. He binds their souls together. And He binds with a glue that was never meant to be unstuck. The Church doesn’t allow divorces because God never gave us the authority to allow them. He said, “Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another makes her an adulteress...” (Mt 5:32).

Teens always ask me, “What about an annulment? Isn’t that just the Catholic version of divorce?” No. An annulment doesn’t say that a couple used to be married and now they’re not. In an annulment, the Church looks at what was going on at the time of the wedding, to see if there was something going on that would have prevented the sacrament of marriage from taking place. If one of the partners didn’t intend to consent to a permanent, faithful marriage that was open to new life, then what happened there that day wasn’t a marriage, and no spiritual bond could have taken place. An annulment just acknowledges that fact; it doesn’t change any facts, and it doesn’t break a bond.



Mary Beth Bonacci is a Catholic speaker and author who speaks to teens about sexuality, abstinence, and marriage.

God’s good plan from the beginning still is possible. Marriage is a good thing. Since God calls a person to marriage, when people say “yes” at the foot of the altar, man and women are not only saying “yes” to the other person but “yes” to God. He is truly present in the marriage. Husband and wife experience love from each other and are an example to the world of how God loves us. In this sacrament, their love brings each other together (unitive) and that loving unity is life-giving to others (procreative).

Those who have a vocation to marriage will have many opportunities to share in the love of God through their marriage.

Be Curious

Re-read Matthew 19:3-8. In your own words, describe what Jesus is saying about marriage.

From your perspective, what are the negative effects of divorce?

What are your own ideas about what it takes in order for a marriage to be solid “from the beginning?”

EXPLORATION

10 min

GRANDPARENTS' MARRIAGE

Since God's vision for marriage is a lifelong, unitive (which means coming together as one, and procreative (which means bearing life) love, there are many great things that happen as a result of two people being married. We'll explore that concept a bit in this exercise.



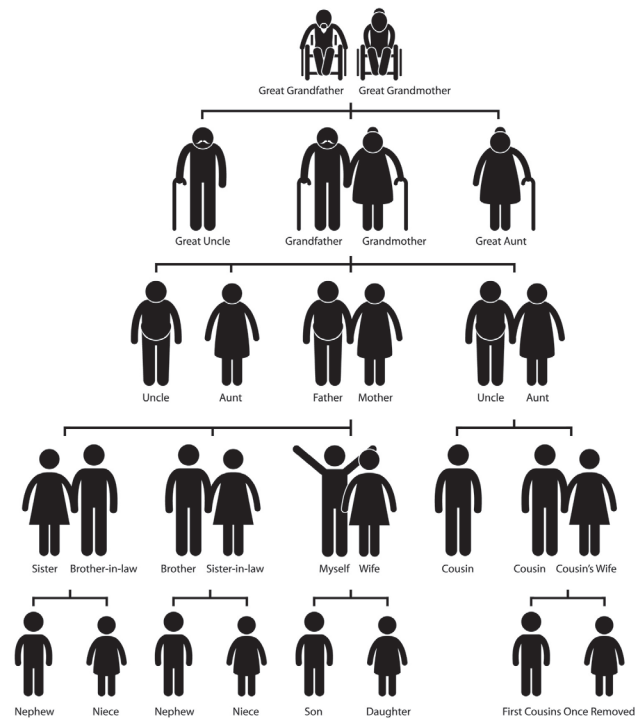
MARRIAGE

EXPLORATION

FAMILY TREE: THE GOODNESS OF MARRIAGE

Imagine that you are helping a friend organize a party for his grandparents' 50th wedding anniversary. On display will be the family tree. Make the family tree, starting with the grandparents at the top, their children (and spouses) and their grandchildren. For each person, write the name and something good that he/she has done, which indirectly was because of the life-giving marriage of the grandparents.

Examples: "James C. Smith. As a fireman he saved three people from burning buildings." or "Michelle T. Smith. As a Labor & Delivery Nurse, she helped thousand of babies to be born."



REFLECTIVE PRAYER

6 min

I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU

Introduce the meditation.

Most people do have a vocation to marriage and will be led to a good person to marry. But believe it or not, the best way to a good, happy marriage is to first seek God with all your heart and find your strength and happiness in Him. In fact, this is what to do no matter what your vocation and no matter whether you are a kid, an adult, or a very old person. During this prayer time, let God remind you of his love for you. Delight in you the way you are right now.

You can listen to the lyrics of this song and pray in whatever way God leads you, either listening, just being, writing, or quietly sharing your thoughts with Him.

Note: you may wish to play the audio without students seeing the video.

VOCAL PRAYER

2 min

Come, Holy Spirit

1. Direct the students to look over the prayer.
2. Students pray the vocation prayer:
Come, Holy Spirit



MARRIAGE

REFLECTIVE PRAYER

"I've Always Loved You" by Third Day



VOCAL PRAYER

Come, Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts
of your faithful and kindle in
them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they
shall be created. And You shall
renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the
Holy Spirit, did instruct the
hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same
Holy Spirit we may be truly wise
and ever enjoy His consolations,
Through Christ Our Lord,
AMEN.