

THE VIRTUES

FOR COUPLES

INTRODUCTION



*Watch your thoughts,
they become your words.
Watch your words,
they become your actions.
Watch your actions,
they become your habits.
Watch your habits,
they become your character.
Watch your character,
it becomes your destiny.*

Frank Outlaw
20th Century Businessman

GROW YOUR MARRIAGE BY GROWING IN VIRTUES

Dear Couple,

We are glad that you have selected this program. Caring for your marriage begins with making time for each other.

Pope Francis said that the Church is fully involved in the story of every Christian marriage, “She is built on their successes and she suffers in their failures.” (May 2015)

The Pope is telling us that when marriages are strong, the Church is strong.

The purpose of this program is to help you strengthen your marriage.

THE TOPICS

This program invites you to reflect on the four Cardinal Virtues: **Prudence, Justice, Courage and Temperance.**

These virtues are important in every person’s life. They are like four hinges that open the door to our success. They help us grow and mature as human beings.

It is the personal maturity of each spouse that contributes to their happiness in marriage.

For example:

- Spouses who, together, make **prudent**, decisions, enjoy greater harmony.
- Spouses that are **honest and fair** with each other grow in trust and strengthen their relationship.

- Spouses that are not afraid to respectfully challenge each other, and have the **courage** to make sacrifices for the sake of the relationship, make their marriage resilient.
- Husbands and wives who practice **self-control** over their emotions and passions make their relationship more stable.

“He who sows virtue reaps glory.”

Leonardo Da Vinci

Your use of **THE VIRTUES** program will help you become aware of your good habits and strengthen them.

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THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

“Moderation and prudence, justice and fortitude... nothing in life is more useful than these.” Wisdom 8:7

Prudence – Justice – Courage – Temperance

“As a couple grows in virtue, they grow in holiness.”

Love and Life in the Divine Plan, USCCB

Helpful Steps in Sharing Your Feelings With Each Other

As you reflect on your daily habits, you may find that you have differences of opinions, or differences in how you do things. That is natural and it is something all couples experience. Here are some suggestions for talking about differences.

1. Make sure to listen to your spouse's point of view and feelings. If you disagree it doesn't mean that one of you is right and the other is wrong.
2. Listen respectfully, and if necessary ask your spouse to explain, so that you can understand better. As you do this watch your tone of voice and your attitude toward your spouse.
3. It may be that it is perfectly fine to have a difference of opinion, or different ways of doing things, as long as you are both willing to live with the differences and the minor discomfort that they may cause.

Dr. John Gottman in studying couples found that 69% of marital conflicts cannot be resolved. Couples choose to live with them.

4. If you come across something that is upsetting to either one of you, take a deep breath. Keep calm and listen to each other's feelings.
5. When necessary, agree to take a break and cool off. Then return to the conversation.
6. Decide if this is an issue that you can tackle alone, or one with which you need assistance. Perhaps you want to talk to a priest or to a counselor.
7. Remember that you are partners on a life journey that leads to God. You will find some bumps along the way and these are opportunities for growth.

Practicing the virtues and praying are great tools for staying on track on your journey and overcoming your challenges. Prayer in particular can be the source of the graces you need.



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WHAT TO EXPECT

Through this program you will observe how other couples practice the virtues, and you will be invited to consider the opportunities to do the same in your daily routines.

Through the practice of **Prudence, Justice, Courage** and **Temperance** you will mature in wisdom, blossom as a person, and grow in your ability to love.

Watching you, your children will learn good habits and by practicing them they will grow in wisdom and be successful in life.

“Ability may get you to the top, but it is character that will keep you there.”

Abraham Lincoln

As Christian spouses we are aided on our journey to virtue by God's grace. At baptism we received the gifts of **Faith, Hope** and **Charity**.

These three virtues guide us and strengthen us as we cultivate the virtues of Prudence, Justice, Courage and Temperance.

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAM

1. Together select 4 dates on your calendar that both of you agree to set aside for couple-time. Decide also how long each will last.
2. On the appointed date and time begin by reciting together the Lord's Prayer or your favorite prayer to remind yourselves that you are in God's presence. Watch one of the videos, and then go out to a quiet place or stay at home if you prefer.
3. Read the article on the flyer that corresponds to the video; review the conversation starters, and choose three questions that catch your attention.
4. Spend 15 to 20 minutes taking turns sharing your feelings and thoughts about each question. As you do this, be considerate of each other.
5. Then do something that you both enjoy doing together.



THE VIRTUES is produced by SIX DATES for Catholic Couples.

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