

True love is measured, not by the warm emotions that accompany it, but in those moments when we see weakness in the one we love. It is measured in how we choose to respond in the face of those weaknesses, shortcomings and sins; will we choose to commit, to stay and love them? We choose to love another and to commit to them, through it all – even amidst the reality of their weaknesses and failures. Rather than wanting them to change, we choose to love our spouse as they are! This is what it means to totally give of oneself! This does not mean that we give our spouse permission to not strive to be the best person they can be, and vice versa, but that we choose to love them each and every day right where they are on their journey to Heaven.

The gift of grace comes to us part-and-parcel with our relationship with God and His desire to heal us, to transform us in simple ways so that we can truly forgive, love and serve one another. Marriage is a school of self-giving; it is where God shapes and forms us to grow in self-giving love. In marriage, we take on the responsibility to care for another person, and we commit to seek what is best for our spouse and our children. It is where we learn to love beyond how we can love on our own.

### UNITY IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN PERFECTION

The purpose of marriage and the sacrament is the sanctification of spouses, wherein God proves His love to us through our spouse. Unity is always better than perfection – let's strive to preserve unity.

## Recognising how our past affects our married and family life

Everything that happened to you in your past comes with you once you enter marriage, and it greatly affects your relationship with your spouse and your family life – death of a loved one, heartbreak, addictions, habits, attitude to finances, etc.... That is why it is so important to have faced these experiences, processed them and sought healing from their impact in our lives before we commit to loving another in the covenant of marriage.

Let's build love from the first moment – so that we can be brought into the greatest love story of all – God's love for us!<sup>16</sup>

Our preparation for marriage began from the time we were born. We've all been preparing for marriage our entire lives. Every heartache, disappointment, trial, suffering, joy, happiness, delight – every experience, every moment, every lesson learned – has impacted us and played a part in who we are right in this very moment. Because of this, we are prepared now for what will come tomorrow – to whatever and wherever God may be calling and leading us. God goes with us, every step of the way.

*"For the Lord your God is he that goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory."*

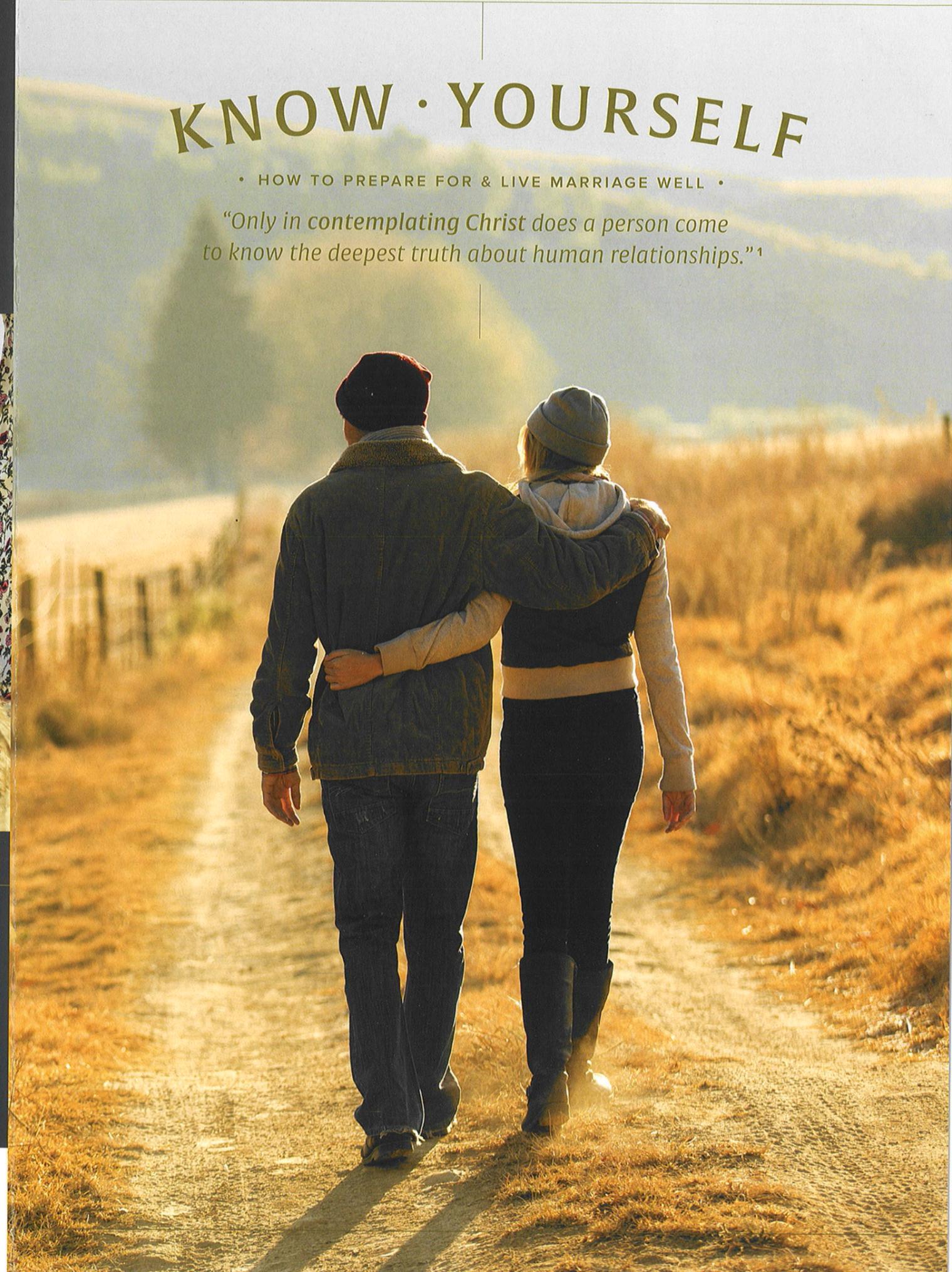
— DEUTERONOMY 20:4



# KNOW · YOURSELF

• HOW TO PREPARE FOR & LIVE MARRIAGE WELL •

*"Only in contemplating Christ does a person come to know the deepest truth about human relationships."<sup>1</sup>*



### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

*Beloved: Finding Happiness in Marriage* Home Edition DVD Set [augustineinstitute.org/formed/beloved/](http://augustineinstitute.org/formed/beloved/)

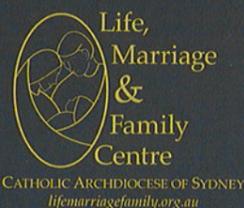
Gary Chapman, *Covenant Marriage*

Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts*

Michel Esparza, *Self-Esteem without Selfishness: Expanding Our Capacity for Love*

Debra Fileta, *True Love Dates: Your Indispensable Guide to Finding the Love of Your Life*

Kimberly Hahn, *Chosen and Cherished: Biblical Wisdom for Your Marriage*



<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (2016), no. 77. <sup>2</sup> Debra Fileta, *True Love Dates* (USA: Zondervan, 2013), 20. <sup>3</sup> *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 101. <sup>4</sup> Taken from *True Love Dates*, 23. <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 27. <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 37. <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 38. <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 39. <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 51. <sup>12</sup> Cf. *Beloved: Finding Happiness in Marriage* series (Augustine Institute, 2015). <sup>13</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 14. <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 15. <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 16. <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

# How does one prepare well for marriage?

How does one prepare well for any path of life, for that matter? The answer to these questions lies in the much bigger questions of "who am I?", "where have I come from?" and "where am I going?" Marriage is a relationship like no other: it is the union of one man and one woman entered into for life, whereby they become one flesh and are invited to experience, in a unique way, the union of Christ who sacrificed Himself unconditionally for His Bride, the Church.

How are we meant to prepare for, and live well, this wondrous vocation to married life? The answer to this question, and life in its entirety, lies in this one truth: the single most important relationship in our lives is our individual relationship with the One who created us— God. Herein lays our meaning of life, our purpose for existing and our reason for loving others, no matter where our uniquely individual journey leads us.

## Cultivate self-awareness

*"Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom."*  
— ARISTOTLE

Pursue awareness through prayer and your relationship with God. Ask God for the grace to see yourself as He does, and to reveal areas in which He wants you to grow. Openness and receptivity to the feedback of those who have our best interests in mind – family, loved ones and friends, spiritual director – can reveal areas in our lives that may need improvement (attitude, virtue, outlook, behaviour, etc...).

*"Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt. 22:39), "Loving others is contingent on the ability to love yourself... Loving yourself requires that you know, value, and respect the person you are while moving toward the person God has made you to be."*<sup>2</sup>  
*"To love another we must first love ourselves."*<sup>3</sup>

## BEGIN BY ASKING YOURSELF THESE THREE QUESTIONS<sup>4</sup>:

### 1. Where do I come from?

- "...we are shaped by what we have learned from those around us."*<sup>5</sup>
- "...knowing your past is crucial to succeeding in your present."*<sup>6</sup>
- "Understanding where you come from means taking a good hard look at your past and giving yourself the freedom to learn from it. Understanding can lead to liberation. Knowledge can bring freedom from the past. For those who don't take the time to understand their past and are blind to how it has shaped them, the road to true love can be difficult."*<sup>7</sup>

### 2. Where and who am I now?

- "a person who listens to God's word but doesn't change is like a person who looks in the mirror but walks away, forgetting what they saw — James 1:23-25"*<sup>8</sup>
- "Your beliefs and view of self are so central to determining the kind of person you will relate to."*<sup>9</sup>
- "...your beliefs about yourself drive so much of what you choose in life. Your identity determines what and even whom you will identify with, because human beings are drawn to what is familiar."*<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Where am I going?

- "Your story has far more to do with finding God's unique calling and purpose for your life than it does with finding the love of your life."*<sup>11</sup>

## Prayer

Put Christ at the centre of your life, firstly, and then at the centre of your marriage. Build and work on your personal relationship with God. Christ's love needs to transform our hearts, so that we can then love our spouse with His love. Let's continually invite Christ into our lives especially by approaching Him often in the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Eucharist.

A personal prayer life enables us to love others with grace, and not just in a human way – but with the grace of God's unconditional, faithful love.

Pursue healing and holiness. Being open to areas of your life where wounds from the past may need to be addressed, so healing and forgiveness can take place is important. Wounds are an experience of 'un-love'; we were not meant to experience them. Wounds then get surrounded by pain and the pain becomes surrounded by fear, and fear leads to managing behaviours. Holiness is the pursuit of being more like Christ, more fully conformed to His Will and to who He created us to be.

*"Be who you were created to be and you will set the world on fire."*  
— ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

## Understand God's plan for marriage and the value of the Sacrament

One of the best ways to prepare for marriage is to understand God's plan for the sacrament, as He intends it to be. Married love is called to be drawn up into God's own love; for more than anything else in the created world, marriage is a sign of God's Divine Love.<sup>12</sup> Jesus came as man, not simply to save us from something – sin - but to save us for something – love that lasts forever; that is, for the intimacy of a marital relationship with the Heart of God.<sup>13</sup>

Grace, which is Divine Life, transforms us to love like Christ Himself! This is the beauty of the grace given to us through the Sacrament of Matrimony – God's Divine Life freely given by God to the spouses so that they may love like Him, with His love, especially in the moments when we fall short in our human frailty.

### CHRIST'S LOVE FOR THE CHURCH

The greatest mystery is Jesus' love for us on the Cross; and our human marriages are reflections of Christ's love for the Church. The marriage relationship between spouses is part of a bigger plan – it is part of a bigger story – thus it is not just about you, it is about Christ's love for all of humanity!



## Being faithful in the small things

*"He who is faithful in very little, is also faithful in very much."*  
— LUKE 16:10

If life is a gift given to each and every person, then how can we make the most of it, even the seemingly mundane? To live in the present is to live one-hundred percent – in the things given to us, right before us, whether they be big or small.

## Discover how to love well

*"Love is a constant challenge thrown to us by God."*  
— ST. JOHN PAUL II

Learn to love others as they need to be loved. The more we know another, the better we can love them, intentionally.

### THE GIFT OF SELF-GIVING LOVE

*"Freedom is best measured by our capacity to love."*  
— ST JOHN PAUL II

We can only love to the extent by which we are free to do so. Is it our pride, fear, lust, greed that is preventing us from being free to love? These things impact our freedom to love wholeheartedly.

### THE PURSUIT OF GREATNESS<sup>14</sup>

We willingly endure hardship, pain and suffering when we truly believe the outcome is worthy. E.g. training for a marathon, triathlon, dance competition, any sport. Just as damaged muscle repairs itself to be stronger, without adversity we ourselves do not get stronger. As humans, in the face of adversity we are strengthened, if we persevere and push through the temporary pain. It is built into us to pursue greatness! This is how we should view our marriages – worthy of the constant effort to persevere in difficulty, seek help when necessary and to consciously work each and every day to love my spouse.

### PURSUE AND CULTIVATE VIRTUE<sup>15</sup>

Strive to grow in virtue continually. Marriage is learning, together, how to pursue our goal in life – Heaven. How can we climb the mountain to Heaven together? It does not mean that one of us runs and the other is dragged behind, but rather helping one another every step of the way to arrive before the Lord together.

To love another is to seek what is best for them. However, this requires virtue – generosity, patience, humility, courage. These virtues are also the life-skills we need to live our lives well, and to live our marriages well. Virtue is necessary to love well and to love our spouse well, too. So, love must be rooted in virtue, for virtue brings authentic joy. Virtue and the freedom to truly love go hand-in-hand: the extent by which I lack virtue, to that extent I am not free to love my spouse. I.e. loss of patience, easily angered, self-centred, laziness, etc... Thus, the more I grow in virtue, the more I grow in my ability to love!