

Marital Catechesis

For troubled marriages and for married couples seeking the renewal of their marriage in the Gospel of God's forgiveness and love in Christ Jesus.

Christian Marriage Commitment for Couples Entering Marital Catechesis:

Believing that marriage is a life-long commitment between a Christian husband and wife, and that it is not to be broken but lived out in the strength and renewing power of Christ's forgiveness, Christian couples enter into this marital catechesis freely, in the firm conviction that the Gospel is the power of God for their life together as husband and wife, and with the desire and prayer to submit to God's Word.

Overview:

This program of marital catechesis will follow a specific program of study from the Holy Scriptures, the Small Catechism Table of Duties on Christian Vocation, and Confession and Absolution. There will be individual sessions with the pastor and each respective spouse, and there will be joint sessions with the couple and the pastor together. Each session will be rooted in a study of God's Word and the pertinent sections from the Table of Duties. Individual sessions may involve pastoral admonishment, advice, and counsel from God's Word toward repentance and confession of sin. Joint sessions will be geared toward a study of marriage and vocation that enables each spouse to see their own sin on the basis of God's Word and to confess their sin to the other and seek from them "forgiveness for Jesus' sake." The pastor will pronounce absolution upon either spouse or both during any and every session at which a confession of sin is made. The pastor will also encourage each spouse to make use of private confession and absolution throughout the time of marital catechesis and after the catechesis is concluded. The pastor will generally not admonish a spouse at a joint session.

Goal of sessions:

As each respective spouse learns more deeply the Word of God, becomes acquainted with their sin against God and their spouse, and is called to repentance by God's Word, they will be given opportunity to confess their sin to their spouse and ask their spouses forgiveness. The pastor will also pronounce absolution and pray for their healing and renewal in God's forgiving grace.

Example of conversation: (During the marital catechesis of "John" and "Mary" one or the other or both might become convicted of their sin and ask to confess to their spouse.)

John: "Pastor, I have something I would like to confess to Mary."

Pastor: "Speak on..."

John: "Mary, I have often become jealous and angry over how much time you spend with the kids. I have been selfish and egotistical, and I have let my anger and jealousy cause me to say hurtful things to you and to neglect the children. I am sorry. Will you forgive me for Jesus' sake?"

Mary: "I forgive you, for Jesus' sake."

Mary: "Pastor, may I confess to John?"

Pastor: "Speak on..."

Mary: "John, when you treated me that way, I hated you because of it. I didn't want to look at you, or speak to you, or make love to you. I became just as bitter toward you as you were toward me. I'm sorry. Will you forgive me for Jesus' sake?"

John: "Yes, Mary, I forgive you, for Jesus' sake. I love you."

Pastor: "John and Mary, in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sin in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Pastor: "Let us pray...(specific prayer is offered on the basis of the sins confessed, the absolution given, and what God's Word desires).

Important note on Marital Catechesis toward confession and absolution: It is the absolution of Christ, that we receive from Him and share with one another, that is the strength and source of renewal for the Christian life and the Christian marriage. Every joint session will be geared toward each spouse confessing to the other. Yet these confessions will never be forced. They must be spontaneous and freely offered on the basis of how each person is moved by the Word of God. There may be some sessions in which neither spouse is prepared to confess. There may be some sessions in which both spouses confess to the other and seek absolution multiple times. At no time are joint sessions to be times wherein accusations are hurled back and forth between spouses. If a spouse believes that they must make an accusation against their spouse, they will first consult with pastor in their private sessions with him and seek his counsel, advice, and permission to do so.

Outline of Sessions:

- One Individual Session with each spouse to review the Marital Catechesis plan and seek their commitment to the individual sessions, joint sessions, and requirements of the catechesis.
- Six Individual Sessions with pastor, every other week, alternating with joint sessions.
- Six Joint Sessions with pastor, every other week, alternating with individual sessions.
- Evaluation at the end of the twelve weeks if further catechesis is warranted and to set up such a program.

Requirements:

- Each spouse will attend all the sessions (6 individual sessions and 6 joint sessions) over the course of 12 weeks.
- Each spouse will attend Divine Service and Sunday morning catechesis weekly.

Spouses Commitment: In good faith and praying for the Lord's blessing upon our study, I willingly and freely enter into this marital catechesis with my spouse and pastor as outlined above.

Signed: _____ Date: _____