

Solidifying Your Marriage Mission

Parish Mentor Meetings – how do they work?

Throughout the learning process of Thrive, you interacted *online* with your mentor couples for each part of the course. Now, you will meet *in person* with a new mentor couple from your parish, but for a somewhat different purpose.

You will be part of the process to choose this couple from among the married couples in your parish. You will decide who you wish to accompany you for these 4 meetings, and you may ask them to consider walking with you for this part of your marriage preparation process. If they are interested, you then seek approval from the person responsible for your marriage preparation at the parish. That person will either approve your first choice or ask you to consider using a different mentor couple and then help you complete the process to find a different couple for these meetings. If, for some reason you are not able to find a good match on your own, the person responsible for your marriage preparation may be able to assign you someone they know from the parish.

These 4 meetings provide a chance for at least 2 beneficial things to occur. They will provide you with a way to connect with another couple at your parish who can support your relationship in the first months and years of marriage. It will also help you to form some additional goals and resolutions about some of the most important things that can provide meaning leading to happiness and joy in your life together. Before each meeting with your parish mentor couple you will read the materials for that session and, when appropriate, do the activity or pre-meeting discussion with your fiancé.

Prior to your wedding:

- ◆ **First Meeting: The Way of Gratitude**
- ◆ **Second Meeting: The Way of Mercy**

After your wedding:

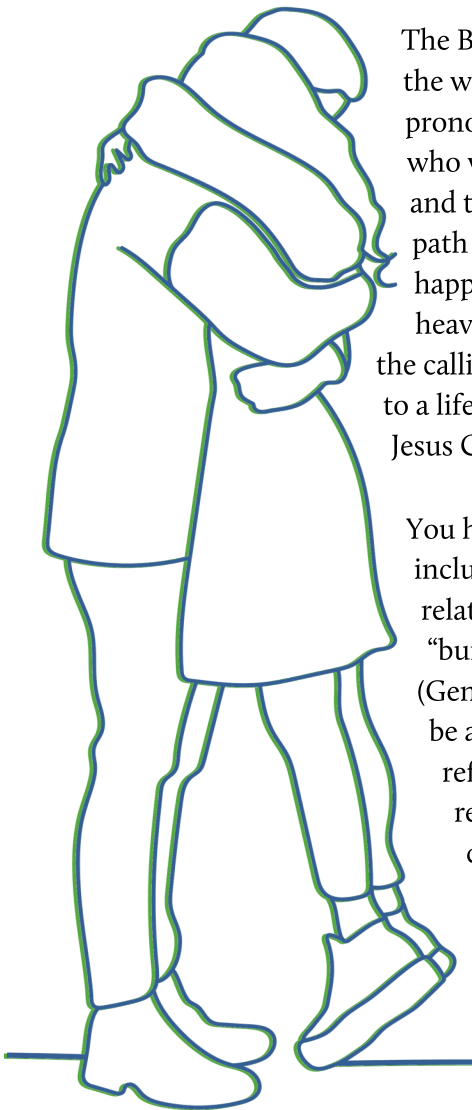
- ◆ **Third Meeting: The Way of Friendship**
- ◆ **Fourth Meeting: The Way of Prayer**



Aiming for Happiness with Intention

Using Your Signature Strengths and Living the Beatitudes

In Thrive chapter 5, you learned about your Character Strengths by taking the VIA questionnaire and doing the card shuffle exercise to determine your signature strengths as a couple and discover how they can work together in your marriage. While your unique combination of strengths as a couple can all work together to develop a meaningful marriage, two of the strengths, *gratitude* and *forgiveness*, stand out as deserving additional attention and development because, according to researchers in the positive psychology field, they are two of the most crucial ways to increase happiness. A strong case could be made that these character strengths are most crucial to a meaningful marriage.



The Beatitudes are a summary of the way of Christ. In them, Jesus pronounces blessing upon those who walk this path, lit by his light and teachings. They describe the path that leads to eternal happiness, life with God, heaven. The Beatitudes express the calling of the baptized Christian to a life intimately associated with Jesus Christ's Passion and Resurrection.

You have learned about human beings' natural desire for happiness; that includes your natural desire to experience happiness in your marriage relationship. There is also a supernatural fulfillment of this desire that was "built" into us because of the way that God created us male and female (Genesis 1:27). For these meetings with your parish mentor couple, you will be asked to reflect upon several of the Beatitudes and consider them in reference to your own marriage. You have already had the experience of receiving feedback and wisdom from your Thrive online mentor couples. Now, your parish mentor couple will meet with you in person, will share their own marriage story with you, and will guide you through these discussions about Marriage Beatitudes.

Matthew 5:3-12

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.



Take a moment to read and reflect on this passage from the Bible:

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. —Colossians 3: 12-15



Couple Discussion Questions

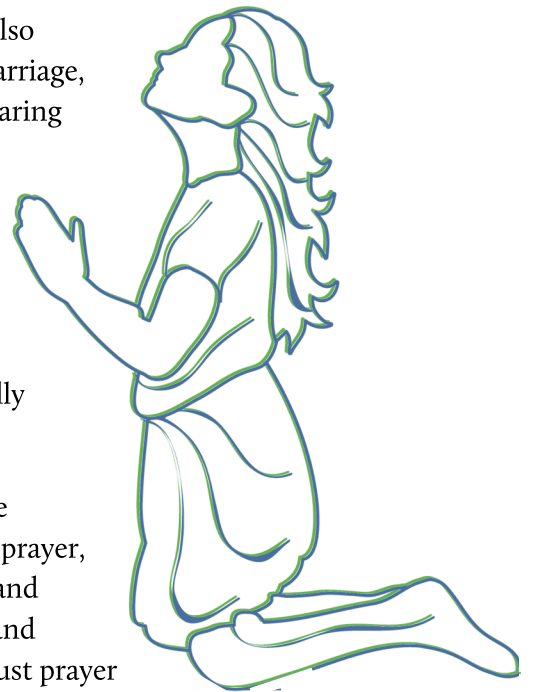
- ◆ In the first sentence above we see a list of attitudes and behaviors with *forgiveness* providing a sort of final word. What connection do you see in this list between the other attitudes (like *compassion* and *kindness*) and *forgiveness*?
- ◆ How do you think love binds together *forgiveness*, *compassion*, *patience*, etc. in harmony?
- ◆ Why do you think that *forgiveness* and *gratitude* are so important to happiness and to marriage?

The Way of Christ

Along with **The Way of Gratitude** (first meeting) and **The Way of Forgiveness** (second meeting), there are two other elements that Christian experience has found to be indispensable in a happy and meaningful marriage: *friendship* and *prayer*. You learned about the value of good friendships in chapter 9. Good friendships are also an essential part of community life within the Church. It is essential that married couples are known, loved, and supported by their parish community, not in some superficial way, but in real friendships with caring people. More experienced married couples can provide guidance and advice.

Friendship with your spouse is also essential. Through the years of marriage, your spouse can increasingly become your confidant and support. Sharing your life together in all aspects and holding nothing back leads to intimacy and deeper trust. This relationship has the potential to be the greatest friendship in your life; however, it is not an automatic thing. Not all spouses become each other's best friend. If you want this outcome, it is much more likely to be attained the more intentionally you develop your relationship in this way.

The Way of Friendship is the focus for the third meeting which ideally should occur shortly after your wedding.



Catechism Notes

“In union with his Savior, the disciple attains the perfection of charity which is holiness.”

—Catechism, 1709

The beatitudes “are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ’s disciples... [They] respond to the natural desire for happiness.”

—Catechism, 1717-1718

Prayer was covered in Thrive chapters 12 and 14. Personal prayer, practice of the Sacraments, and prayer together as a couple and family are elements of a robust prayer life in marriage. The more you take an intentional approach to planning your prayer life, the more likely you are to have one that is consistent and meaningful. In chapter 9, you learned about the research that shows increased levels of happiness among those who practice religious faith. You were invited to consider one or more couples you know who have a personal faith that you find inspiring and whose experiences you might learn from. Once married, you will also have an opportunity to explore this topic with your Parish Mentor Couple in the fourth meeting on **The Way of Prayer**.

