

# Sex: Sacred Embrace

## SESSION FIVE



### Prayer

*Father,*

*We thank you for the gift of our relationship  
and the joy we have had through each other.  
Open our eyes to see the beauty  
and the meaning of sexual love  
as we prepare to give ourselves  
to each other in marriage totally and  
permanently.*

*Give us a deep awareness  
of the sacred meaning of sexual love  
so that we might communicate  
our love to each other sincerely.*

*We ask this in Jesus' name,  
Amen.*



### Concept: **SEX AS A LANGUAGE**

Sex is not just an activity; it is a language, a sacred body language that expresses your total gift of self to each other.

Sex says with the body the words of the wedding vows:

**"I freely give myself to you totally  
faithfully and fruitfully, and I freely  
accept your total, faithful and fruitful gift  
of self."**



# BODY Language



## Reflect: WHAT AM I SAYING WHEN...

I hold your hand?

---

---

I put my arm around you?

---

---

I kiss you gently?

---

---

I kiss you passionately?

---

---

I hold you close?

---

---

I touch you tenderly?

---

---



## At Home: TOUCH MESSAGES

To sensitise you to what you will be saying through your love making when married, start by putting verbal language on each and every physical act of affection. Do this for one week any time you are physically together.

Each time you touch your fiancé, speak in words what you are 'saying' with your body. Ask yourself: What do I want to say to you when I put my arm around you, hold your hand or kiss your lips?

For example:

- **Holding Hands** - I choose you. I like to be seen with you. We are a couple.
- **Embracing, Snuggling** - I enjoy being close to you, I like feeling you near me, I want to spend time with you.
- **Kissing** - You are special to me. My relationship with you is different than with anyone else. I feel affection for you. I am strongly attracted to you. I want to say things to you that I do not know how to express with words.
- **Caressing** - You excite me. I want to discover who you are.

Before the next session, reflect on your experience of verbalising your body language by answering the questions to the right.

## REFLECT ON THE EXPERIENCE:

Did the meaning of some of your own or your fiancé's gestures surprise you? Which ones?

---

---

---

---

---

---

Did you misinterpret any of their touches before they put their own meaning on them? Explain.

---

---

---

---

---

---

Did you find yourself being more conscious of, and intentional in, your communication through touch?

---

---

---

---

---

---





This image shows a full page of primary-ruled paper. It features multiple sets of horizontal dashed lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. The paper is otherwise blank, with no text or other markings.



## Activity: **SEXUAL INTEGRITY**

## Write

Separately, write your answers to the questions on this and the following two pages.

**SEX IS SOMETHING WE 'SAY', NOT SOMETHING WE 'DO'.**

It is the most intimate communion between a man and woman and is so much more than just a physical activity and yet almost everything around us - movies, magazines, books, even your friends and relatives- approach sex as something we 'do'. Most people never question this attitude and can naturally assume that if it is something that you 'do', you should 'do' it well. Prowess and performance can creep into your notion of sex and make you **self** conscious rather than **other** conscious.

If sex is merely something you 'do', it can be reduced to an action you do to someone or have done to you. At some point, both men and women are likely to feel used and guilty. This attitude that 'sex is just an activity' is responsible for most of the loneliness and isolation in marriage. For example:

- **Couples become 'performance-orientated'** when they tend to focus on technique and positions. This develops a self-conscious or self-centred disposition. It can result in pressure to perform or experiment sexually, preoccupation with how they look and a loss of confidence. More significantly, it works against an **other-centred** orientation which is the essence of genuine love.
- **They also see sex as recreation.** Because they think of sex as something fun to do, they can treat it as just a form of recreation. People tend to put off recreation until the serious responsibilities of life are taken care of; so sex can be relegated to the bottom of the 'To Do' list, after everything else is done. Seeing other activities as more serious or compelling will result in a lowering of the priority of sex in your relationship. You will also put conditions on being sexual: you have to be 'in the mood' or it must be during leisure time. In combination, these attitudes result in sex becoming less frequent, more impersonal and soulless.





c) **How important** is it to you? (scale 1-10 for each value ticked above)



## CONNECT

Unclutter, share your answers to all the questions (1-5) with your fiancé. When strong emotions emerge, describe them in as much detail as possible using the L.I.F.E. framework. Listen proactively with all your senses.

Then answer the following questions together:

d) How can you **embrace** your fiancé's value(s)?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

e) **Brainstorm** possible solutions and note the implications for your relationship.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

f) **Evaluate:** What is in the best interests of your relationship?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## REALITY CHECK:

# Cohabitation

Cohabitation is a general term that refers to a number of different living arrangements. These comments refer to those couples who are both living together and also sexually active, (that is, they are not just sharing a residence as friends) and are not in a permanent alternative to marriage (de-facto relationship).

Despite the widely held belief that a period of cohabitation is a helpful transition to marriage, both the statistics from secular social studies and the insights offered by the Church lead to the same conclusion: that cohabitation **reduces** the likelihood of marital success, not enhances it. This begs three questions: Why is this true? If true, why is cohabitation so common? And what does it mean for those of us who have been living this way?

### How does cohabitation harm marriage?

The proposition that cohabitation helps one prepare for marriage is seriously flawed at many levels. Living together without a 'vowed commitment' taken before family and friends is not the same as the 'real thing'. Marriage is like parachuting - you can prepare for it but by its nature it is an 'all in' experience; you can't half or partly jump out of a plane!

Marital success is not found in efficient household management, it is found in a total commitment and cohabitation by its very nature is a limited commitment. Without a commitment for life, it is both natural, and sensible, to hold back in some way; in the absence of a permanent commitment, it's risky to be too open or too vulnerable. Therefore cohabitation trains couples to live with limited, conditional trust. This tendency to hold back, be it conscious or unconscious, establishes interaction patterns that naturally

become the norm in a couple's relationship. Even after they marry, most cohabiting couples return to the patterns of interaction that they had already established before marriage.

### Why do so many couples cohabit?

The move into cohabitation often arises from good motives. With the prevalence of divorce, many singles approach marriage with a fear of failure which encourages the attitude that it is prudent to 'try out' marriage first; we want to test the relationship because the cost of failure is so great. Another reason is that many desire to have the benefits of marriage while keeping their options open for the future. Of course, in many places, cohabitation has become so widespread it becomes a cultural norm and couples drift into it without ever giving it considered thought.

### What does this mean for those who cohabited before marriage?

Are they less likely to have a successful marriage? Statistically, they are more likely to divorce. However, the odds can be beaten when couples take proactive steps to reduce the negative impact of cohabitation and maximise their chances of marital success.

Ideally, couples will live separately prior to the wedding and refrain from sexual intercourse until the wedding night. This helps them to reset their cohabiting interactions so that they can create new, marital ones. In addition, they need to be alert to patterns of complacency and be particularly proactive in maintaining their intimacy and trust through ongoing education.

## REFERENCE

1. David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead "Should We Live Together" the National Marriage Project, "First Things First".



## Discuss

1. What is your reaction to the idea that sex is a body language that expresses a person's total gift of self to another?
2. What do you think 'sexual integrity' means? What does 'sexual integrity' look like for the single person? For the married person?
3. Research has shown that cohabitation before marriage undermines rather than strengthens the marriage. In the light of the material presented in this session, why do you think this would be?





# SEXUAL Atmosphere

Sexual atmosphere is a climate of tenderness, openness, responsiveness and generosity that is created when you are attracted out of yourself and allow your masculinity or femininity to be fully alive and active. It's like a non-verbal communication between you that signals your attraction to and receptivity to each other.

You may be tempted to believe that you either feel sexual or you don't, that there's nothing you can do about it. The truth is that your sexual desire is too important to be left to chance. You can choose to cultivate and nurture the sexual atmosphere between you no matter how you feel.

When you consciously focus on the other's goodness and attractiveness, choose to touch, affirm, listen attentively, and openly share your feelings, you create a climate of awareness of your masculinity and femininity. This is the fertile soil in which love grows. Behaviours that express your sexuality and draw out the sexuality of your fiancé create the romantic awareness of being 'in love'. Being in love makes the work of marriage fun.



## Tool: **CONNECT HUG**

Stay connected throughout the entire day.

### **CONNECT HUG** **1 MIN, 5 TIMES PER DAY**

The Connect Hug is simply an extended hug which you hold for as long as it takes to reconnect, usually one to two minutes. Make a habit of doing this at least five times a day. It can be an excellent circuit breaker when you are having an argument or a tense discussion. It is also very effective in just realigning and refocusing your attention when busyness starts to dominate.



## Tool: **CONNECT KISS**

Set the tone of the sexual atmosphere to vibrant and sensual:

### **CONNECT KISS** **10 SECS, 2 TIMES PER DAY**

The Connect Kiss is taking a full 10 seconds to 'smooch' together. Put aside other distractions so that you can be fully attuned to each other.

**When saying goodbye:** Avoid the race out the door - spend 10 focussed seconds communicating your commitment to each other. "Even while apart, I am loving you and working for our life together".

**When greeting each other** (especially after a day's separation): Make your Connect Kiss express your delight to be together again. "I've missed you! I am so glad to be in your arms again".





- 

- Lord, we thank you  
for the gift of our sexuality.  
Help us to honour you in the way  
that we love each other.  
Grant us awe and respect  
for the way you have created us  
and for giving us to each other in love.  
God of mercy and compassion,  
heal us of any injury  
we may be carrying  
because of our sexual history.  
Lead us to grant forgiveness  
or seek reconciliation if necessary.  
Restore us to wholeness  
and fill us with an urgency to love  
with our whole mind, heart and body.  
In your name, Amen.***

- [illegible]



Both dimensions are necessary for your love making to authentically reflect the divine.

## 5.7





---

# Natural

## FERTILITY METHODS

---

'Openness to life' does not require any specific number of children but rather is an attitude that invites God into your decisions about when to conceive a child. It is a continual awareness of his presence in the mystery of your love.

Happily, science has now provided a completely reliable yet perfectly natural way to regulate birth that does not undermine the message of total, mutual self-gift and yet gives you complete freedom to choose when and how many children to conceive. Natural fertility methods will keep you open to God, in tune with each other, and in awe of your sexuality. It is the only method of birth regulation that does not undermine the intimate 'total gift of self' but can draw a couple closer in love.

### ....continued

6. Complete the sentence: If for some reason, we are unable to have children, I ...



See the Member Hub  
**FOR MORE IDEAS AND RESOURCES**

[www.SmartLoving.org/Engaged/Member](http://www.SmartLoving.org/Engaged/Member)

---