

# When the Cake is Gone: How to Get Married and Stay Engaged

-- by Dr. James Healy, Catholic Family Life Minister

## *Reflection & Study Questions*

Talk with your partner about what you heard, or what struck you.  
The questions below may help your conversations go deeper.

### **Section One: Introduction**

*“Lord, it is good for us to be here!” Peter at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:4)*

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If marriages are windows of God’s love into the world, whose marriages have been windows of God’s love for you, and why?

How would you like your marriage to be a window of God’s love in the world?

What would you say are the three hardest things about marriage?

In your life together so far, including courtship, what have been the “Transfiguration time” – when everything seemed glorious and perfect?

What have been the times of the Cross, when you were struggling?

What have been the experiences of Resurrection – when new life came out of the struggle in you relationship?

### **Section Two: The Back to Back Vow: Committed to the Long Haul**

*“Two are better than one...if the one fails, the other will lift up his companion.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)*

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Speaking in terms of the Cross, what has to “die” so that two people can begin a new life together in marriage?

What has to die in newlywed marriage when the first child comes?

What is the challenge when you hope for children and find that you’re unable to have them?

Where will you go for support – to what people, and to what places – when your relationship changes and you have to re-commit? Who are the friends of your marriage?

We all have character flaws that probably will never go away completely – perhaps a temper problem, or moodiness, or messiness. How has your partner helped you manage your character flaw? What kind of support or encouragement do you need?

Regarding your spouse's flaws, where are you pushing your spouse's hot buttons instead of soothing them and helping to manage them?

In your relationship right now, what changes are you being called on to accept; what expectations are you being called on to let go of, so that the next phase of your marriage can come to life?

### **Section Three: The Face to Face Vow: Becoming and Staying Friends and Lovers**

*“Deep waters cannot quench love, nor floods sweep it away.” (Song of Songs 8:7)*

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What does “unfaithfulness” mean to you?

In the ladder of goods, God comes first, your marriage comes second, and other good things come after that. In your life, what other good thing is in danger of pushing your marriage out of its prime position?

What walls of faithfulness have been breached in your relationship? Where are you being called to repair the walls?

What does it mean to “top off the emotional gas tank” with your spouse?

What kinds of activities or rituals do you have that help to keep your marriage near the top of the “ladder of goods”?

If, as Deborah Tannen says, men are attracted more to “report talk” – to share information – and women to “rapport talk,” - to grow closer – what is the gift that each in a marriage can give to the other?

Regarding the “golden triangle” of work, parenting, and household management, what has been some of your successes here in working out a partnership? What is one small adjustment here you can both agree to make?

Where are you now being called to greater faithfulness?

#### **Section Four: The Shoulder to Shoulder Vow: Serving on a Two-person Team**

*“I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me.” (Matthew 25:40)*

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The Emmaus story is in Luke 24:13-35. What Emmaus experiences have you had in your life together – where you offered hospitality, and received much more in return than you ever expected?

Regarding your own children – in what ways are you being called to greater generosity?

If you’re not ready to have children yet, how are you being called to practice hospitality?

Where can you reach out to other married couples in hospitality to them, where you can both give and receive support?

Where are you as a couple currently being called to biblical hospitality, knowing that you can’t tell in advance what “gift” you will receive from the guest?

#### **Optional re-commitment ceremony**

We have been on the mountain together. We have carried crosses together, and with God’s help, we have seen good things come out of our struggles. In that spirit, I commit to our future together without knowing what that future will be. I pledge to be faithful to you, and put you above all others. And I pledge to join with you in finding ways for your love to reach out beyond the two of us.

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