

Coffee and Conversation

“Coffee and Conversation” is a model for individual reflection or small group discussion where participants can explore the various topics presented in this year’s Respect Life Program.

This guide can be used in whatever way is most helpful – to guide personal reflection, to plan and host a one-time group event, or to put on a 7-week series. There is no “one-size-fits-all” formula to using this guide, but here are a few suggestions to help you get started.*

Preparation for a Small Group Discussion:

How? Obtain the approval of your pastor, and collaborate with other parish groups.

Who?

1. Decide who your intended audience will be. (Examples: youth, young adults, women’s group, men’s group, religion class, RCIA classes, parish school of religion classes, a group of friends, family, etc.)
2. Decide who will moderate the discussion (for example, a youth minister, pastor, teacher, catechist, etc.). *Note: The moderator should prepare for the discussion in advance by reading the pertinent article, reflecting on the questions, and making use of the related resources list for that article. Resource lists for each article are available at www.usccb.org/respectlife.*

When? Designate a date and time appropriate for the intended audience.

Where? Pick a location where the event can take place (for example, a local coffee shop, the parish hall, etc.).

Invite! After determining your intended audience, promote the event accordingly. (Examples: bulletin announcement/insert 2-3 weeks in advance, pulpit announcement week before and/or week of, church bulletin board, social media, newsletters, etc.)

The Event:

- Open in prayer. Use the “Every Life is Worth Living” prayer card from the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, use a standard prayer like an *Our Father* or a *Hail Mary*, or ask someone to lead extemporaneously.
- Depending on the amount of time available, read one or more of the Scripture verses suggested either silently or aloud.
- Discuss each question. (To encourage an environment suited for group sharing, you may consider breaking into small groups of 12 or fewer if there are a large number of people in attendance.)
- Consider, share, and discuss how the Church’s teaching affects our everyday lives and how we can be “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Mt 5:13,14) in each of the areas discussed. Commit (aloud or privately) to do one thing that helps yourself and/or others on their journey toward Heaven. Use one of the resolutions provided, or come up with one on your own.

* These suggestions are just to provide some ideas for parish, school, or personal use. **Be sure to follow the parish and diocesan policies in place, especially safe environment policies.** If you have any questions about applicable policies, contact your parish, school, diocese, and/or other relevant authoritative entity.

Love 101: Back to Basics

Read (as a group or beforehand): Love 101: Back to Basics

Scripture passages for reflection: Psalm 51(50):10, John 10:10, Galatians 5:13

Discussion Questions:

1. What is chastity? How does it affect all our relationships, romantic or otherwise?
2. What does it mean to say that the human person is both a body and a soul? What implications does this have on how we treat others, particularly in the realm of sexuality?
3. Why are certain actions that are engaged in outside of the marital relationship considered “not loving”? How do they fall short of a fully integrated, loving relationship?
4. How does living a chaste life help us to clearly view our relationships with others?
5. What are some concrete ways that we can express love to others, outside of a sexual context? How can these enhance even our romantic relationships?
6. How am I responding to God’s call to love others chastely?

Make a resolution:

- Pray for the grace to look at others with purity. Ask for the intercession of Our Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph to love chastely.
- Implement some of the concrete expressions of love from question # 5 into your daily life.
- Write a letter to a friend, expressing your gratitude for them and their influence in your life.

Love, Sex, and Sterilization

Read (as a group or beforehand): Love, Sex, and Sterilization

Scripture passages for reflection: 1 John 4:18-19, 1 John 3:18, Proverbs 3:5-6

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it harmful to separate the “life-giving” aspect of sex from the “love-making” aspect?
2. How does sterilization close the door to a fruitful marriage? Why is this contrary to God’s plan for life and love?
3. What are some ways that we can learn to trust God more deeply? Particularly in our marriages and our family lives?
4. Outside of physically bearing children, how can couples build fruitful marriages? What are some characteristics of a fruitful marriage? (It may help to think of couples that you know.)
5. Think of a time when you felt called to follow a challenging path. Did you walk down that road? If so, what did you learn in the process? How might these life lessons apply to Christ’s call to trust him within this area of our marriages, or regarding any Church teaching we might find difficult to understand and embrace?

Make a resolution:

- Pray for couples who struggle with the Church’s teaching on the fruitful aspect of married love, and pray for all married couples to love each other more perfectly—with their whole hearts, minds, and bodies.
- If you are married, choose one way you will intentionally seek to reveal God’s love through your marriage.
- Reflect upon some of your own life experiences when you took the more challenging road. What did God give you through those experiences?

A Perfect Gift

Read (as a group or beforehand): A Perfect Gift

Scripture passages for reflection: Matthew 17:20, Psalm 139(138):14

Discussion Questions:

1. How do clinical labels fall short of describing the whole human person?
2. Why is it important to distinguish loving someone for what they can do versus loving someone for who they are? What implications does this have for our society as a whole?
3. Do I love others in my life with a sacrificial love?
4. How can suffering help us to love others more deeply? Does suffering increase our capacity to love?
5. How can children like Charlie teach us that every life is good and a perfect gift?

Make a resolution:

- Pray a Rosary for people with disabilities, for their families, and for those who struggle to see their dignity and worth.
- Offer to help a friend/family/community member who has a child with a disability.
- Spend time getting to know someone who puts you outside your comfort zone. Ask the Lord to help you see them as he does, and keep your eyes (and heart!) open to see what he reveals.

Maggie's Story: Living like Dad

Read (as a group or beforehand): Maggie's Story: Living like Dad

(Bonus!) Watch:

Meet Maggie in a three-minute video, and hear her share her story at www.goo.gl/4HM8Ib.

(Full URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJwWKDGBS5o>)

Scripture passages for reflection: Psalm 23(22):4, Romans 5:3-5, 1 Peter 1:6-7

Discussion Questions:

1. Is our suffering meaningless? What can suffering teach us about loving and living well?
2. Why does our ability to "function" not have any bearing on our dignity as persons?

3. Does a person's "quality of life" determine his or her dignity? Why is physician-assisted suicide falsely compassionate?
4. What implications does physician-assisted suicide have on the larger medical community? On society as a whole?

Make a resolution:

- Pray a Divine Mercy Chaplet for those who are nearing death or who are struggling with end-of-life decisions.
- Take time to visit someone in the nursing home or hospital.
- Make a meal or offer to help with household chores for a friend or member of your local community who is ill.

Supporting Families Who Receive a Prenatal Diagnosis

Read (as a group or beforehand): Supporting Families Who Receive a Prenatal Diagnosis

Scripture passages for reflection: Revelation 21:4, Jeremiah 1:5, 1 Thessalonians 4:14

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the effects that a prenatal diagnosis may have on a family?
2. In these cases, why is abortion not the answer? What further negative effects might an abortion have on the situation?
3. How does perinatal hospice help to affirm the dignity of the child and the parents?
4. Why is it important to pay attention to the way we try to support people in difficult situations? What are some words and actions that might be helpful? What are some words and actions that would be unhelpful?
5. What are concrete ways that we can support a family who is facing a prenatal diagnosis?

Make a resolution:

- Pray the Rosary for families who are suffering the loss of their child.
- Spend time with a friend, family, or community member who has lost a child. Make

them a “care” basket, or simply write a card or note, letting them know of your support, love and prayers.

- Look into local perinatal hospice opportunities and promote them in your parish and community. If one doesn’t exist, research opportunities to start one.
- Volunteer with a perinatal hospice opportunity or at a NICU center.

10 Ways to Support Her When She’s Unexpectedly Expecting

Read (as a group or beforehand): 10 Ways to Support Her When She’s Unexpectedly Expecting

Scripture passages for reflection: John 16:33, Psalm 139(138):13, Galatians 6:2

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important to be supportive of a woman who is facing an unexpected pregnancy, even if the circumstances are difficult? What are some ways that we can avoid passing judgment and instead, be supportive of those who find themselves with an unexpected pregnancy?
2. Why is every life worth celebrating, no matter how it began?
3. How might supporting a woman facing an unexpected pregnancy look different in different situations (i.e., a teenager versus a married mother of 5, a well-off woman versus someone who is struggling to make ends meet, etc.)?
4. What are some ways you can support mothers who are unexpectedly pregnant in your own community?

Make a resolution:

- Donate time, money, or resources to a local crisis pregnancy center.
- Pray at an abortion clinic for all those who are facing unexpected pregnancies, or look into sidewalk counseling.

- If you have a friend who is facing an unexpected pregnancy, take her to a movie, to get her nails done, or even just out for ice cream. Let her know that you are there for her.

10 Surprising Tips for Love the Culture Won’t Tell You

Read (as a group or beforehand): 10 Surprising Tips for Love the Culture Won’t Tell You

Scripture passages for reflection: Matthew 5:8, Matthew 5:27-28; Ephesians 3:20-21; Psalm 51(50)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is chastity? Why is it so much more than a bunch of rules?
2. What are some aspects of chastity that I find particularly difficult to live out? How can I learn more about them and live them more fully?
3. What challenges does modern media (movies, TV shows, music, etc.) present to living a chaste lifestyle? How can we protect our minds and hearts from being flooded with messages contrary to the truth about ourselves, love, and God?
4. Who inspires me to live a chaste life? What qualities does this person have that I want to have? What can I do to be like that person in those ways?

Make a resolution:

- Pray for a deeper understanding of the virtue of chastity; ask God how he is calling you to live a pure life.
- Limit the amount of media you consume daily; get rid of TV shows, movies, magazines, books, etc. that hinder a chaste lifestyle.
- Assess your wardrobe: If your clothes don’t reflect a person who is trying to live a chaste life, get rid of them.