

My Slogan: “Practice Saved Sex!”

By Fletcher Doyle

I am a journalist and a convert. That sounds like an oxymoron.

Two years after joining the Catholic Church, my wife and I began practicing Natural Family Planning (NFP). I found that the chastity required to get through the periods of abstinence caused profound changes in me. I stopped daydreaming of swimsuit models, wealth and fame. I became grateful for all God had given me, most of all for my wife. My appreciation for her and all that she gives me grew, improving an already good 20-year marriage.

I was curious to find out if other people had been so affected. This is where the journalist and the covert converged. I interview NFP couples and read thousands of words on conjugal union and the effects of contraception on the relationship between men and women. So for five years I thought about nothing but sex, except during the hockey playoffs. This was a challenge to chastity, but the result was a book, *Natural Family Planning Blessed Our Marriage: 19 True Stories* (Servant Books).

Here is what I learned. When women took control of fertility with the pill and the IUD in the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, men said “cool.” Men's behavior changed, as they no longer felt responsible for their sexual partners. (This can be seen in the disappearance of shotgun marriages.)

There was an accompanying drop in commitment between men and women. Trust between the sexes fell because men no longer acted in expected patterns.

When you add in the increase in women's wages and the decrease in men's wages, you created couples who are neither financially nor sexually interdependent. This is why, social scientists say, the divorce rate doubled in that time frame.

NFP can repair the damage. Men acknowledge responsibility to their wives. Commitment increases because the couples know when pregnancy is likely before they make love. Their trust increases: she trusts he will fulfill his obligations when he assents to sex; he trusts she is making accurate observations of her fertility and is keeping him informed.

He develops a sense of awe in the way God made her, and she develops a sense of gratitude that he is willing to sacrifice his own pleasure for her sake. And both grow in their love and trust in God when they see the plan for sex and marriage that He built into their bodies. I have seen and experienced how using Natural Family Planning can make a difference in marriage. That should come as no surprise because it's God's way to practice responsible parenthood – it's His design for life and love!

Fletcher Doyle is the author of *Natural Family Planning Blessed Our Marriage*, (Servant Books). He and his wife live in the Diocese of Buffalo.