

The BEATITUDES

A COUPLE'S PATH TO GREATER JOY

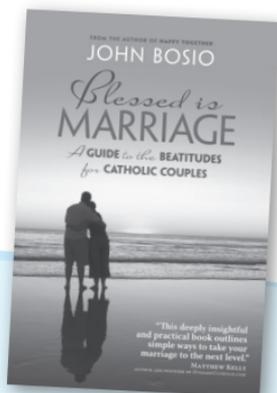


Grow in your marriage guided by your Christian faith

JOHN AND TERI BOSIO

Based on

BLESSED IS MARRIAGE:
A GUIDE TO THE BEATITUDES
FOR CATHOLIC COUPLES



This booklet shows how to schedule, plan, promote, and facilitate **The BEATITUDES** program successfully.

The DVD contains: six videos, the Program Coordinator's Guide in PDF format, six handouts for the participants, six opening prayers, and a program evaluation form, also in PDF format.

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Video Hosts of **The BEATITUDES: A Couple's Path to Greater Joy.**

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John and Teri Bosio have been married 39 years and have two daughters, a son-in-law, and a grandson. They spent many years leading religious education and marriage and family life programs at the parish and diocesan level. They served on the staff of the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Kansas, as Family Life Coordinators. John has a master's degree in theology and a master's degree in counseling. For 13 years he served three parishes in Kansas as a marriage and family therapist. Teri has many years of parish ministry experience as adult formation and RCIA director, and director of religious education. John and Teri produced **SIX DATES for Catholic Couples**, which is based on John's book **Happy Together: The Catholic Blueprint for a Loving Marriage** (Twenty-Third Publications, 2008). John and Teri continue their ministry to families and couples by conducting workshops and leading retreats around the country. They live in Nashville, Tennessee.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The BEATITUDES: A Couple's Path to Greater Joy explores the Beatitudes as the path to holiness in Christian marriage. Drawing from the Beatitudes proclaimed by Jesus in Chapter 5 of the Gospel of Matthew, the program offers a faith-based perspective in dealing with and growing through some of the situations married couples experience in everyday life:

- the disillusionment of dreams unfulfilled
- the tendency to deny our problems
- the stress and exhaustion of working and raising a family
- the temptations encountered in the work environment and through the social media
- the need for compassion toward one another
- the beauty and goodness of human sexuality, and Natural Family Planning
- the gift of new life in children
- the benefit of managing emotions in times of conflict
- the pressures to conform to secular values that are prominent in today's society

Situations like these are the crucible of married life. How couples deal with them can build or tear down their relationship. Their faith and God's grace can guide and sustain them as they journey through the ups and downs of marriage.

The BEATITUDES: A Couple's Path to Greater Joy is based on the book: *Blessed Is Marriage: A Guide to the Beatitudes for Catholic Couples* (Twenty-Third Publications, 2012) by John Bosio. Below is a guide for reading the book in conjunction with the program.

- Session 1 Your Marriage is Your Call to Holiness
Read Introduction: God's Love Song
Chapter 1: Blessed are They...
Chapter 2: Stay Turned Toward God
and Each Other
- Session 2 Your Marriage is a Dance
Read Chapter 3: Accept What Is
Chapter 9: Stand Up for What You Believe
- Session 3 Your Marriage is a Three-Legged Race
Read Chapter 4: Treat Your Spouse with Respect
Chapter 8: Forgive
- Session 4 Your Marriage is Your Treasure
Read Chapter 5: Do What Is Right
- Session 5 Your Marriage is Your Home
Read Chapter 6: Learn Compassion
- Session 6 Your Marriage is a Celebration of Life
Read Chapter 7: Express Gratitude
Conclusion: Ordinary Holiness

Dear Program Coordinator,

Thank you for volunteering to lead this marriage-building program for the couples in your parish. Your role as the coordinator will be to promote and ensure the successful implementation of **The BEATITUDES** program. It may be helpful to you to assemble a team of couples to help coordinate, promote, and facilitate this program. Consider involving members of the Parish Council, Knights of Columbus, Women Auxiliaries, etc. Doing so will engage these organizations in promoting the program and will help increase the participation.

This program can be used as “date nights” for couples, or as a program for small faith communities, or for couples’ retreats. This booklet will assist you in implementing the format that you think is best suited for your parish. The guidelines in this booklet are flexible. Adjust them to meet your parish’s needs.

Consider opening the program to neighboring parishes. You may also target specific groups of couples, for example those married five years or less, or those married six to fifteen years.

Thank you for giving your time to help couples in your parish. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

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Materials

- Book (one per couple): *Blessed Is Marriage: A Guide to the Beatitudes for Catholic Couples*. To order visit **www.happy-together.net**.
- Opening Prayers and Handouts (one per person): These are stored in a PDF format on the DVD. The Handouts are conversation starters for each couple’s private sharing.

Printing directions:

- » Place your DVD in the computer Disk Drive.
- » If **The BEATITUDES** program starts, close it.
- » Go to “My Computer” and right-click the DVD icon.
- » Choose “Explore” — you will find a folder with the handouts.

Like any other program the success of **The BEATITUDES** depends on good planning in collaboration with key members of the parish community. Make sure your pastor and parish staff agree that a program like this is needed in your parish.

Discuss with your pastor and parish staff the best format and schedule for your parish (*see below*). Set aside six weeks or six dates on the parish calendar for this program. Recommended times of the year are early fall and early spring: mid September to end of October, and during Lent.

Getting Organized

Depending on the size of your parish you may want to assemble a team of couples to help you coordinate, promote, and facilitate **The BEATITUDES** program.

Promoting *The BEATITUDES*

To publicize and communicate the program, make use of the parish bulletin, the parish newsletter, the diocesan newspaper, and other media. Design flyers and posters. Consider opening the program to neighboring parishes and fax or e-mail bulletin announcements to them.

The publicity does not end when the program starts. It should continue throughout the weeks or months that **The BEATITUDES** is taking place. Use the parish bulletin for reminders. Use newspapers, radio, and television for stories and pictures. Take pictures of the events and post them on the parish bulletin boards and on the parish web site.

Registration

You may want to have couples register for the program so that you know how many copies of the companion book to order. In your registration process the following information is helpful: couples' names, number of years married, phone number, e-mail address, and number of children needing childcare and their ages.

Childcare

Providing childcare is helpful, if possible. Use the information collected in the program registration process to register the children and to know how many childcare volunteers to recruit, and the space you will need. Talk to the parish staff about following the guidelines of the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth.

Materials Needed

- Book (one per couple): *Blessed Is Marriage: A Guide to the Beatitudes for Catholic Couples*. To order visit www.happy-together.net.
- Handouts and Opening Prayers for each session. The handouts and opening prayers can be printed from the DVD. (*For directions on finding the handouts on the DVD, see page 6.*)
- Nametags and pens or pencils may be necessary, depending on the format you use.

Room Set Up — Creating an Environment

Schedule the event in a room that can comfortably accommodate the number of couples you are expecting. You will need:

- A DVD player and a television. (A projector and a large screen are ideal.)
- Chairs arranged so that all can see the TV or screen.
- Prayer table with a candle, Bible, and other religious items you wish to include.

On the Day of the Event

Greet the participants as they come in. Ask couples to sign in, and give each couple a copy of the companion book *Blessed Is Marriage*. Play soft music in the background to set the mood. You may want to include flowers and candles, refreshments and snacks.

Facilitation

This is the most challenging role because it requires some preparation, the ability to communicate with the whole group, and leading the participants during the evening's activities.

Facilitator's Tasks

Preparation Prepare for the event by previewing the videos and handouts contained on the DVD. Read the chapter or chapters of the companion book that corresponds to the subject of the video.

Prayer Start the event on time with an opening prayer. The DVD offers an opening prayer for each video to help you. Feel free to use other prayers.

Introduction Welcome everyone, introduce yourself, and acknowledge the various parish organizations sponsoring or supporting this event. Give a brief outline of the planned activities. These will vary depending on whether you are using the program as a "date program" or a small group discussion; or which format you use.

Show the video Ensure the DVD is ready to be played so that all you need to do is press "play."

Give directions When the video is finished, give directions to the group on what to do next. These directions will vary depending on the format chosen. See "Format Options."

NOTE: If after showing the video you plan to send the couples out on a date (see "Format Options," Option 1) you may want to give them a list of local restaurants or coffee shops that are willing to give a discount to the program's participants. In planning your program you may want to visit with the local business owners and invite them to help sponsor your activity with discounts to participants who stop in during their date.

FORMAT OPTIONS

Among the early decisions to be made by your parish will be the format you want to use for this program. Discuss the options below with your pastor or the member of the parish staff responsible for this event, and together decide what is best for your parish.

OPTION 1 “Date Nights”

This will be used if you plan to offer the program as a series of dates for couples. Start with the opening prayer and introductions. View the video, give each couple the handout with directions, and then dismiss the couples to go out on their own for a date. Encourage the couples to use the handout to guide them in their conversation during their date. Remind them to be back in time to pick up their children if childcare is provided.

Recommended duration of the date: 2 to 2.5 hours

Schedule:

Prayer and Introduction *(10 to 12 minutes)*

Video *(12 minutes)*

Directions and Dismissal *(5 minutes)*

OPTION 2 Series of “Enrichment Events”

These are either held at the parish or in small faith communities. Begin with a social activity, pot luck dinner, or mingling with light finger food.

Recommended duration of the event: 2 hours

Schedule:

Prayer and Introduction *(10 to 12 minutes)*

Social gathering *(45 to 60 minutes)*

Video *(12 minutes)*

Group Discussion *(30 minutes)*

Use the questions found after each chapter in the book to engage the couples in discussing the topic of the evening. If the group is large you may want to divide the large group into smaller groups.

Closing *(5 minutes)*

Gather the participants for a closing prayer and announce the next topic and

when you will meet again. Give each couple two copies of the handout and invite them to make time at home or during a date (see below) to discuss the questions found in the handout. In preparation for the next meeting ask couples to read the related chapter(s) from Blessed Is Marriage: A Guide to the Beatitudes for Catholic Couples.

Couple Time *(between sessions)*

If you hold your meetings weekly, invite couples to discuss the questions on the handout before the next meeting. If you hold your meetings monthly, encourage couples to go on a date before the next meeting and discuss the questions on the handout. This discussion is totally private; they will not be asked to share what they discussed.

Feel free to adjust the above formats or to create your own that best fits the schedules and practices of your parish community.

NOTE: During the first date or meeting, since couples may not have read the Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 of the book, it would be helpful if someone can say a few words about the content of these chapters before showing the video.

OPTION 3 *Couples' Retreat*

This can be an opportunity to invite couples to reflect on the Beatitudes as the path to holiness in Christian marriage. The materials from this program provide helpful resources for this type of retreat. Among these resources are the chapters of the book *Blessed Is Marriage*, from which the Retreat Leader can develop a brief reflection. In addition, questions for private and group discussion can be found at the end of each chapter. Other resources are the videos and the handouts for each video.

Divide the time available into six conferences according to the titles of the six videos. In each conference you can show the video and invite couples to spend time in private conversation using the questions from the handouts and/or the book. If desired, invite participants to discuss as a group the questions found at the end of each chapter in the book.

Because the format of a Couples' Retreat may vary from parish to parish, the authors are willing to work with your parish team to create a format that meets your parish's needs. Contact us at: jbosio1@aol.com.

MORE TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

How to Use the Videos

Please note that the videos are short and are interspersed with questions for the attendees. These questions are answered on the video through interviews with couples. If you are using Option 2 you can stop the video after each set of interviews and ask the participants to share their own answers with each other as a couple or as group.

Follow Up

In parish ministry it is important to keep in touch with couples attending events. During the registration or sign-in process at the start of each session make sure to collect from each couple: their name, address, phone number, and e-mail address. You may use the e-mail address to send a reminder during the week or to send inspirational quotes from time to time.

Evaluation

At the end of the series take some time with your team to evaluate what went well and what can be improved the next time. You may find it useful to ask participants to give you feedback. An evaluation form is included with the handouts on the DVD. Feel free to adapt it.

Addressing Pastoral Concerns

As you prepare to facilitate this program in your parish be aware that once in a while you may be approached by a couple with questions about having their marriage convalidated, or wanting marriage counseling, or other family needs. Find out from a member of your parish staff to whom you should refer these pastoral concerns.

In the pages that follow you will find a general guide for facilitating the program in the formats of **OPTION 1: "Date Nights"** or **OPTION 2: "Enrichment Events."**

THEME: Listen to God's voice.

Key messages from *Blessed Is Marriage*

(INTRODUCTION, CHAPTERS 1 AND 2)

The book and the video open with an invitation to listen to God's voice that speaks to us deep within our heart. God calls us to be in union with himself. He has called us to holiness in marriage. Jesus traces for us the path to holiness in his Sermon on the Mount. The first video explores the first Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). We are poor in spirit when we are aware that we need God more than anything else.

Facilitator's Tasks

1. Prepare

- Read the Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 of *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Preview Video 1 on **The BEATITUDES** DVD.
- Ensure you have all the materials needed (books, copies of the Opening Prayer and handouts, pencils, etc.).
- Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD player, and create a romantic mood with music, flowers, candles, etc.
- Optional:* Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet.

2. Introduction and Opening Prayer

- Introduce yourself and topic; and open with a prayer.
- Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- Stress the importance of keeping this time together fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during their dates or their private conversations. The dates and conversations are for celebrating what is good about their relationship, sharing their faith, and praying together.

3. Play the Video

"Your Marriage Is Your Call to Holiness"

4. Leading the Event

Follow the suggested schedule for OPTION 1 or OPTION 2, page 10.

5. Closing

Before dismissing the couples for their date (OPTION 1) or at the end of the gathering (OPTION 2) remind couples of the calendar date of the next meeting and encourage them to prepare by reading Chapters 3 and 9 of *Blessed Is Marriage*.

THEME: Marriage is not immune to suffering.

Key messages from *Blessed Is Marriage* (CHAPTERS 3 AND 9)

Spouses are imperfect people who, like dancers, sometimes step on each other's toes, lose the rhythm of the dance, or don't feel like dancing. In other words, marriage is not immune to suffering. "Blessed are those who mourn..." (Matthew 5:4). With this Beatitude Jesus invites us to embrace our humanness and our discomfort, and to turn to God for consolation. Jesus also said: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake..." (Matthew 5:10). Christian spouses may feel discomfort because of the pressure to conform to social values that are contrary to the Gospel. The Catechism reminds us that Christ is present to the spouses and helps them face the challenges they encounter.

Facilitator's Tasks

1. Prepare

- Read Chapters 3 and 9 of *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Preview Video 2 on **The BEATITUDES** DVD.
- Ensure you have all the materials needed (books, copies of the Opening Prayer and handouts, pencils, etc.).
- Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD player, and

create a romantic mood with music, flowers, candles, etc.

- Optional:* Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet.

2. Introduction and Opening Prayer

- Introduce yourself and topic; and open with a prayer.
- Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- Stress the importance of keeping this time together fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during their dates or their private conversations. The dates and conversations are for celebrating what is good about their relationship, sharing their faith, and praying together.

3. Play the Video

"Your Marriage Is a Dance"

4. Leading the Event

Follow the suggested schedule for OPTION 1 or OPTION 2, page 10.

5. Closing

Before dismissing the couples for their date (OPTION 1) or at the end of the gathering (OPTION 2) remind couples of the calendar date of the next meeting and encourage them to prepare by reading Chapters 4 and 8 of *Blessed Is Marriage*.

THEME: Marriage requires teamwork.

Key messages from *Blessed Is Marriage* (CHAPTERS 4 AND 8)

With the image of the three-legged race the program reminds us of the importance of collaboration in marriage. Unless spouses are meek and willing to show respect for each other, and are willing to forgive when mistakes are made, it is difficult to run the three-legged race of marriage. This session explores two Beatitudes: "Blessed are the meek" (Matthew 5:5) and "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9).

Facilitator's Tasks

1. Prepare

- Read Chapters 4 and 8 of *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Preview Video 3 on **The BEATITUDES** DVD.
- Ensure you have all the materials needed (books, copies of the Opening Prayer and handouts, pencils, etc.).
- Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD player, and create a romantic mood with music, flowers, candles, etc.
- Optional:* Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet.

2. Introduction and Opening Prayer

- Introduce yourself and topic;

and open with a prayer.

- Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- Stress the importance of keeping this time together fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during their dates or their private conversations. The dates and conversations are for celebrating what is good about their relationship, sharing their faith, and praying together.

3. Play the Video

"Your Marriage Is a Three-Legged Race"

4. Leading the Event

Follow the suggested schedule for OPTION 1 or OPTION 2, page 10.

5. Closing

Before dismissing the couples for their date (OPTION 1) or at the end of the gathering (OPTION 2) remind couples of the calendar date of the next meeting and encourage them to prepare by reading Chapter 5 of *Blessed Is Marriage*.

THEME: Value and protect your marital relationship.

Key messages from *Blessed Is Marriage* (CHAPTER 5)

Jesus teaches us that we are blessed when we hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6). In marriage “doing what is right” starts with honoring the fundamental commitment spouses make to each other on their wedding day. That commitment is the foundation of the marital relationship, which is the couple’s treasure. This treasure must be cherished and protected. Spouses need to develop boundaries to keep intruders out of the relationship. Some threats to the relationship come from social media and the work environment. Most important in protecting their treasure is a couple’s ability to stay connected to each other.

Facilitator’s Tasks

1. Prepare

- Read Chapter 5 of *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Preview Video 4 on **The BEATITUDES** DVD.
- Ensure you have all the materials needed (books, copies of the Opening Prayer and handouts, pencils, etc.).
- Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD player, and create a romantic mood with

music, flowers, candles, etc.

- Optional:* Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet.

2. Introduction and Opening Prayer

- Introduce yourself and topic; and open with a prayer.
- Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- Stress the importance of keeping this time together fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during their dates or their private conversations. The dates and conversations are for celebrating what is good about their relationship, sharing their faith, and praying together.

3. Play the Video

“Your Marriage Is Your Treasure”

4. Leading the Event

Follow the suggested schedule for OPTION 1 or OPTION 2, page 10.

5. Closing

Before dismissing the couples for their date (OPTION 1) or at the end of the gathering (OPTION 2) remind couples of the calendar date of the next meeting and encourage them to prepare by reading Chapter 6 of *Blessed Is Marriage*.

THEME: Make your marriage the place where you want to be more than anywhere else.

Key messages from *Blessed Is Marriage* (CHAPTER 6)

“Home is where the heart is,” and marriage is a couple’s home. Home is where we find understanding and compassion. Jesus preached: “Blessed are the merciful...” (Matthew 5:7). Compassion is the quality that leads spouses to put into practice Jesus’ call to mercy. Being merciful starts with becoming aware of each other’s needs and helping each other meet those needs. Through compassion we make our marriage our home.

Facilitator’s Tasks

1. Prepare

- Read Chapter 6 of *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Preview Video 5 on **The BEATITUDES** DVD.
- Ensure you have all the materials needed (books, copies of the Opening Prayer and handouts, pencils, etc.).
- Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD player, and create a romantic mood with music, flowers, candles, etc.
- Optional:* Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet.

2. Introduction and Opening Prayer

- Introduce yourself and topic; and open with a prayer.
- Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- Stress the importance of keeping this time together fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during their dates or their private conversations. The dates and conversations are for celebrating what is good about their relationship, sharing their faith, and praying together.

3. Play the Video

“Your Marriage Is Your Home”

4. Leading the Event

Follow the suggested schedule for OPTION 1 or OPTION 2, page 10.

5. Closing

Before dismissing the couples for their date (OPTION 1) or at the end of the gathering (OPTION 2) remind couples of the calendar date of the next meeting and encourage them to prepare by reading Chapter 7 and the Conclusion of *Blessed Is Marriage*.

THEME: Be grateful for God's gifts.

Key messages from *Blessed Is Marriage* (CHAPTER 7)

This chapter and video celebrate how spouses are collaborators with God in the creation of new life. Spouses are invited to reflect on the gifts they have received from God, including their sexuality. The video and chapter close with a reflection on Natural Family Planning.

Facilitator's Tasks

1. Prepare

- Read Chapter 7 and the Conclusion of *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Preview Video 6 on **The BEATITUDES** DVD.
- Ensure you have all the materials needed (books, copies of the Opening Prayer and handouts, pencils, etc.).
- Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD player, and create a romantic mood with music, flowers, candles, etc.
- Optional:* Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet.

2. Introduction and Opening Prayer

- Introduce yourself and topic; and open with a prayer.

- Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book *Blessed Is Marriage*.
- Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- Stress the importance of keeping this time together fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during their dates or their private conversations. The dates and conversations are for celebrating what is good about their relationship, sharing their faith, and praying together.

3. Play the Video

"Your Marriage Is a Celebration of Life"

4. Leading the Event

Follow the suggested schedule for OPTION 1 or OPTION 2, page 10.

5. Closing

Before dismissing the couples for their date (OPTION 1) or at the end of the gathering (OPTION 2) give the couples a copy of the evaluation form. A sample evaluation form is found on the DVD with the Handouts and Prayers.