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ABOUT THE LUTHERAN COURSE ON MARRIAGE

Combine the wit and wisdom of *The Lutheran Handbook on Marriage* (Augsburg Fortress, 2006), the example and advice of Martin and Katie Luther, the insights of the presenters, and the real-life anecdotes of many couples, and you have this course for married couples of all ages and at all stages. A key ingredient is missing, however, until you and your spouse sit down with your small group and add your own questions, perspectives, stories, and laughter to this mix. Then you'll see that marriage is not necessarily a recipe for disaster or a half-baked idea, but a gracious gift.

ABOUT “WINKING LUTHER” AND “KATIE LU”

Ever since Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora renounced their vows of celibacy and embraced marriage as a lifelong vocation, Lutherans the world over have accepted marriage as a holy calling, as holy (and sometimes as ascetic) as any religious order or office.

The wry winks and knowing smiles on our forebears' faces indicate, in that oh-so-Lutheran way, that marriage cannot be enjoyed without a well-developed sense of humor. Thanks to some hard work and down-to-earth theology (and maybe a little helpful advice from time to time), Lutheran marriages will continue to exemplify the shared promise of salvation by grace through faith that makes us one.

INTRODUCTION

The Vision of Marriage

“Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Across the eons of time, countless men and women have joined together in this most holy of bonds, one of the most important relationships we will ever have. So important that everyone from saint to sinner has something to say about it. And lots of what's been said about this divine institution has been anything but divine! From a wonderfully hot bath that grows cold the longer you sit in the tub, to an unusual war—one where you sleep with the enemy—to a train wreck waiting to happen.

But nearly all of us will agree on this: Marriage is an adventure, one that uses all of your resources—and then some—to successfully blend the lives of two people into a single loving family.

The Lutheran Course on Marriage celebrates this divine institution. With a chance to relax and learn together, you will discover new treasures in your relationship that will strengthen and enrich your lives. And what better way for you to discover the treasures in your own marriage than with the tools of God’s Word and the practical wisdom of Martin and Katie Luther.

A Family Reunion

The Lutheran Course on Marriage works something like a family reunion. There will be an arrival time, a gathering of the whole family, conversations in smaller groups, farewells, and the ride home.

Table Talk: Martin Luther shared a great deal of wisdom and practical advice in informal conversations over dinner, a tradition known as “Table Talk.” As you arrive for each session (or at each meal, if you’re taking this course during a retreat), you’ll be invited to enjoy a time of informal Table Talk. This portion of the session is very much like the exciting moments right after you arrive at a family reunion—when you eagerly catch up on the lives of your relatives, celebrating successes and enjoying each other’s company. It’s in that same spirit of love and sharing that you will gather with other couples in The Lutheran Course on Marriage and catch up with old friends, make some new friends, and share what’s been going on in your lives.

Large Group Stuff: The session then shifts focus to hearing and learning with the entire large group. This is like that special time in a family reunion when children—no matter how old they are—settle back and listen to stories told to them by their aunts and uncles or grandparents. The time in a family gathering when one generation shares the treasures of their life experiences with the next. In The Lutheran Course on Marriage, this happens with a video of presenters and married couples sharing jewels of wisdom designed to enrich marriages.

Small Group Stuff: You are then invited to move into a small group for a more intimate and focused conversation. This part of the session looks like the fun interludes that happen during a family reunion when smaller groups of siblings or cousins run off to their favorite spots to talk. So in The Lutheran Course on Marriage, small groups of three or four couples meet in separate areas for more focused discussion on the session’s topic.

Wrap-Up: Next, you will be invited to reconvene in the large group. This is much like the good-byes that families say at the end of a reunion.

At-Home Stuff: But that's not the end of the session, because you and your spouse will find yourselves continuing your conversations on the drive home and into the following days, sharing things you've learned, discussing things you're wrestling with, and even making decisions about things to change. To help guide this continuing conversation, you will be sent home with questions and activities based on the session you just enjoyed. (If you're on a course retreat, try out some At-Home Stuff between sessions.) Use these questions and activities as much as you want, whenever you want. At-Home Stuff is a list of suggestions to keep conversation going, not a list of requirements!

So relax, have fun. Come to the reunion. Eat a little, sing a little, laugh a whole lot. Enjoy yourselves and enjoy the company of others who "took the plunge" into the adventure we call marriage.



Couples will find themselves continuing their conversations on the drive home from each session.