

THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR'S GUIDE

SIX DATES *for Catholic Couples*

John and Teri Bosio

**Grow in your marriage
guided by your Christian faith.**

This is an out-of-the-box program and video series. This booklet shows how to schedule, plan, promote, and facilitate SIX DATES successfully.

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

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John and Teri have been married 37 years and have two daughters and a grandson. They have spent many years leading religious education and family life programs both at the parish and diocesan level. For four years they served on the staff of the Archdiocese of Kansas City, in Kansas as members of the Family Life Office leading programs in marriage preparation, marriage enrichment, and establishing divorce support groups. Teri served as the Director of Adult Formation for three years and Director of Youth Formation for six years at St. Stephen Catholic Community in Old Hickory, Tennessee. John has a Master's Degree in Theology and a Master's Degree in Counseling. For 13 years he served three parishes in Kansas with a Christian based practice in marriage and family therapy. Twenty-Third Publications published John's book: **Happy Together, The Catholic Blueprint for a Loving Marriage**, in 2008. Currently John is an international manager for a Fortune 100 corporation. He is also an adjunct faculty member at Aquinas College in Nashville, TN. John and Teri continue their ministry to families and couples by conducting retreats around the country. They live in Nashville, Tennessee.

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

SIX DATES for Catholic Couples fills a gap in parish resources for married couples. It is a response to the call of The National Pastoral Initiative For Marriage, of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, for materials with a positive message about marriage. In this spirit, **SIX DATES** presents an inspiring view of Christian Marriage by interweaving the wisdom of the Catholic tradition, data from the social sciences, and life experiences of married couples.

SIX DATES is based on the book: **Happy Together: the Catholic Blueprint for a Loving Marriage**, by John Bosio (Twenty-Third Publications, 2008).

SIX DATES helps couples strengthen their marriage by encouraging them to make time to enjoy each other's company. Dating is a ritual that comes naturally to all couples. Unfortunately, as years go by in a marriage, this practice is often neglected.

The program consists of thought provoking materials for six dates. Spouses start their date by coming to the parish where they view a brief video and receive a handout to facilitate conversation during the date. Then, they continue on their date. To make it easier for couples to participate, it is recommended that the parish provide childcare during the planned activities.

The **SIX DATES for Catholic Couples** program includes six videos that blend candid interviews with couples, real situations, questions, scripture stories, and references to the Catechism and the Church's teachings.

SIX DATES for Catholic Couples is a marriage-building opportunity for a parish community. This program intends to put the spotlight on what is positive in a marriage relationship and on the strength couples gain from their Christian faith.

The **SIX DATES** program focuses the couple's attention on what is good "about us," and the blessings spouses find in each other and in their life together. Couples bring to the program their treasures – the jewels of their marriage, and spend time during their dates to polish them and make their marriage shine.

This is not a program to help couples solve problems, to analyze differences, or to explain why conflicts exist. If you encounter couples struggling with their marriage encourage them to seek professional help.

COORDINATOR'S GUIDE

Dear Program Coordinator,

*Thank you for volunteering to lead this series of dates for the couples in your parish. Your role as the coordinator will be to promote and ensure the success of **SIX DATES**. It may be helpful to you to assemble a team of couples to help coordinate, promote, and facilitate this program. Valuable resources for this may be organizations in your parish such as: Parish Council, Knights of Columbus, women auxiliaries, etc. Doing so will involve these organizations in promoting the program and will help increase the participation.*

The guidelines in this booklet are flexible. Adjust them to suit your parish's needs. This program can be held in the evening or in the afternoon, or it can be a Sunday lunch date.

Consider opening the program to neighboring parishes. You may also target specific groups of couples, such as 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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Scheduling the SIX DATES program in your parish

Like any other program the success of **SIX DATES** depends on good planning in collaboration with key members of the parish community: the pastor, the parish staff, the parish council members, and parish organizations.

Seek the agreement of your pastor and the parish council to set aside six weeks during which the parish encourages couples to go on weekly dates. Recommended times of the year for this program are early fall and early spring: mid September to end of October, and during Lent. You can also schedule the dates once a month for six months.

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 **SIX DATES**.

Promoting SIX DATES

To publicize and communicate the program, make use of the parish bulletin, the parish newsletter, the diocesan newspaper, and the local community newspapers, radio and/or television stations. Design flyers and posters. Consider opening the program to neighboring parishes and fax bulletin announcements to them.

The publicity does not end when the program starts. It should continue throughout the weeks that **SIX DATES** is taking place. Use the parish bulletin for reminders. Use newspapers, radio, and television for stories and pictures about the event. Post pictures of the events 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 **Happy Together** to order. In your registration process the following information is helpful: couples' names, phone number, e-mail address, number of children needing childcare and their ages.

Childcare

Providing childcare is important for the success of this program. 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.

Materials Needed

- A copy for each couple of: **Happy Together, the Catholic Blueprint for a Loving Marriage** from Twenty-Third Publications. To order call: 800-321-0411 or visit www.23rdpublications.com.
- Handouts for each session. The handouts can be printed from the DVD.
 - Place your DVD in the computer Disk Drive.
 - If the **SIX DATES** program starts, close it.
 - Go to “my computer” and right-click the DVD icon.
 - Choose “Explore” – you will find a folder with the handouts.
- Nametags and Pens or pencils

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 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 **Happy Together**. 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 **Happy Together** that corresponds to the subject of the "date."
- *Prayer:* Start the event on time with an opening prayer. One option is reciting the **Prayer For Couples** from **Happy Together**, page 5.
- *Introduction:* Welcome everyone, introduce yourself, and acknowledge the various parish organizations sponsoring or supporting this event. Give a brief outline of the planned activities. Introduce the topic for the "date" and start the video.
- *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 for this program by your parish. See "Format Options."

NOTE: If after showing the video you plan to send the couples out on their date (Option 1 – See Format Options) you may want to give them a list of local restaurants or coffee shops that are willing to give a discount to the **SIX DATES** 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 the dates. You may want to discuss the options below with the pastor or the member of the parish staff responsible for this event, and together decide the format design that is best for your parish. Keep in mind that the recommended time for each date is between 2 to 2.5 hours. Beginning and ending on time is important, especially if you are providing childcare. Consider using no more than a half hour for the introduction, the video, and directions for the date. Each Date should follow the same format.

Option 1: Opening prayer and introductions. View video, give each couple the handout with directions, and then dismiss the couples to go out on their own for the date. Encourage the couples to use the handout to discuss the topic of the “date.” Remind them to be back on time to pick up their children. 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: Begins in the same way as Option 1, but after the video is shown, couples remain at the parish facility for the rest of the date. Recommended duration of the date: 2 to 2.5 hours.

Schedule:

- **Prayer and Introduction** -10 to 12 minutes
- **Video** -12 minutes
- **Directions** - 5 minutes
- **Couple Time** -30 minutes

Give the couples the handout. Invite them to spend time alone in private conversation using the handout as a guide. Couples may go to a quiet corner, to another room, or outside if weather permits.

- **Fun group activities*** -1 to 1.5 hours
- **Closing** -5 minutes

Gather the participants for a closing prayer and announce the topic and when you will meet next, and invite couples to read the appropriate chapter(s) from **Happy Together**.

***Fun group activities:** These need to be activities that are considered to be fun by the participants. Depending on the age of the couples or the cultural heritage of your parish, you may engage the couple in games of Charades, Pictionary, Karaoke, invite a local entertainer, play the Newlywed Game, have couples bring their favorite CDs and hold a dance, or have a potluck dinner, etc.

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.

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 date 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. After the **SIX DATES** program is over, the parish staff may want to continue to correspond with these couples, send them articles on marriage, or invite them to future events through the e-mail addresses collected.

Evaluations

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.

Materials:

- **Book: Happy Together** - Order one copy per couple. To order call: 800-321-0411 or visit www.23rdpublications.com.
- **Handouts:** Print one per couple. The handouts are stored in a PDF format on the DVD. Printing directions:
 - Place your DVD in the computer Disk Drive.
 - If the **SIX DATES** program starts, close it.
 - Go to “my computer” and right-click the DVD icon.
 - Choose “Explore” – you will find a folder with the handouts.

Guide for Date One

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Theme: *Remember your love story.*

Key messages from Happy Together, Chapter 2: Once Upon a Time...

The chapter guides the readers in recalling the high points and low points of their love story. It invites them to become aware of the mystery that surrounds their relationship. The author explains that each couple's unique love story has a special meaning when it is seen not just as the story of "you and me" but as a part of something bigger than them. Each marriage has a unique role in God's grand love story with humanity.

The event starts with an opening prayer, an introduction (10 to 12 minutes), and the viewing of the Date One video (12 minutes). This is followed by 90 to 120 minutes of couples' date time, either at the parish or out in the community.

FACILITATOR'S TASKS:

1) Prepare by:

- a. Reading Chapter 2 of **Happy Together**
- b. Preview **Date One** on the **SIX DATES** DVD
- c. Ensure you have all the materials needed (Books, Handouts, Pencils, etc)
- d. Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD Player, and create a romantic mood with music, flowers, and candles.
- e. Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet, copies of the handouts and copies of **Happy Together** for each couple.

2) Introduction and Opening Prayer:

- a. Introduce yourself and open the evening with a prayer.
- b. Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book: **Happy Together**.
- c. Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- d. Stress the importance of keeping the evening fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during these dates. The dates are for celebrating what is good about their relationship.

3) Play the video: "Once Upon a Time..."

4) After the video:

- a. If you plan to dismiss the couples for their date away from the premises, remind them to pick up their children on time, and to prepare for the next date by reading Chapters 1 and 2 of **Happy Together**.
or
- b. If you plan for couples to stay at the parish for the full date give them directions on what to do next. At the end of the date remind them to read Chapters 1 and 2 of **Happy Together**.

Guide for Date Two

MARRIAGE IS...

Theme: *What do you believe about marriage?*

Key messages from Happy Together, Chapter 1: What Do You Believe?

The author challenges the readers to become aware of what they believe about marriage. What we think and believe affects the way we act. This chapter introduces a set of beliefs about marriage that leads to happiness: marriage is not a private affair; it is a response to God's call to serve him; entering marriage is saying "Yes" to God; spouses are a gift for each other; selfishness is the root of most marital problems; Christ is our help and our model for loving each other.

The event starts with an opening prayer, an introduction (10 to 12 minutes), and the viewing of the Date Two video (12 minutes). This is followed by 90 to 120 minutes of couples' date time, either at the parish or out in the community.

FACILITATOR'S TASKS:

1) Prepare by:

- a. Reading Chapter 1 of **Happy Together**
- b. Preview **Date Two** on the **SIX DATES** DVD
- c. Ensure you have all the materials needed (Books, Handouts, Pencils, etc)
- d. Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD Player, and create a romantic mood with music, flowers, and candles.
- e. Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet, and copies of the handout.

2) Introduction and Opening Prayer:

- a. Introduce yourself and open the evening with a prayer.
- b. Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book: **Happy Together**.
- c. Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- d. Stress the importance of keeping the evening fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during these dates. The dates are for celebrating what is good about their relationship.

3) Play the video: "Marriage Is..."

4) After the video:

- a. If you plan to dismiss the couples for their date away from the premises, remind them to pick up their children on time, and to prepare for the next date by reading Chapter 3 of **Happy Together**.
or
- b. If you plan for couples to stay at the parish for the full date give them directions on what to do next. At the end of the date remind them to read Chapter 3 of **Happy Together**.

Guide for Date Three

WHAT KEEPS YOU TOGETHER?

Theme: *What keeps spouses in love with each other is the ability to see the good in each other and in their marriage.*

Key messages from Happy Together, Chapter 3: What Keeps You Together?

The chapter invites the readers to acknowledge that each person is imperfect. To find happiness in marriage spouses need to see past each other's imperfections. They need to see the good that each possesses because God made each of them to be a gift for the other.

The event starts with an opening prayer, an introduction (10 to 12 minutes), and the viewing of the Date Three video (12 minutes). This is followed by 90 to 120 minutes of couples' date time, either at the parish or out in the community.

FACILITATOR'S TASKS:

1) Prepare by:

- a. Reading Chapter 3 of **Happy Together**
- b. Preview **Date Three** on the **SIX DATES** DVD
- c. Ensure you have all the materials needed (Books, Handouts, Pencils, etc)
- d. Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD Player, and create a romantic mood with music, flowers, and candles.
- e. Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet, and copies of the handout.

2) Introduction and Opening Prayer:

- a. Introduce yourself and open the evening with a prayer.
- b. Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book: **Happy Together**.
- c. Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- d. Stress the importance of keeping the evening fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during these dates. The dates are for celebrating what is good about their relationship.

3) Play the video: "What Keeps You Together?"

4) After the video:

- a. If you plan to dismiss the couples for their date away from the premises, remind them to pick up their children on time, and to prepare for the next date by reading Chapter 4 of **Happy Together**.
or
- b. If you plan for couples to stay at the parish for the full date give them directions on what to do next. At the end of the date remind them to read Chapter 4 of **Happy Together**.

Guide for Date Four

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Theme: Learning to love requires overcoming selfishness.

Key messages from Happy Together, Chapter 4: What About Me?

“What about me?” is the question that keeps spouses from becoming the gift for each other that God intends them to be. “What about me?” is a question that tempts us to act selfishly. As children of Adam and Eve we are weak in resisting selfishness. Spouses can overcome their selfish tendencies and grow in love when they turn to Christ who is the source of strength and grace in their life.

The event starts with an opening prayer, an introduction (10 to 12 minutes), and the viewing of the Date Four video (12 minutes). This is followed by 90 to 120 minutes of couples' date time, either at the parish or out in the community.

FACILITATOR'S TASKS:

1) Prepare by:

- a. Reading Chapter 4 of **Happy Together**
- b. Preview **Date Four** on the **SIX DATES** DVD
- c. Ensure you have all the materials needed (Books, Handouts, Pencils, etc)
- d. Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD Player, and create a romantic mood with music, flowers, and candles.
- e. Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet, and copies of the handout.

2) Introduction and Opening Prayer:

- a. Introduce yourself and open the evening with a prayer.
- b. Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book: **Happy Together**.
- c. Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- d. Stress the importance of keeping the evening fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during these dates. The dates are for celebrating what is good about their relationship.

3) Play the video: “What About Me?”

4) After the video:

- a. If you plan to dismiss the couples for their date away from the premises, remind them to pick up their children on time, and to prepare for the next date by reading Chapters 5 through 10 of **Happy Together**.
or
- b. If you plan for couples to stay at the parish for the full date give them directions on what to do next. At the end of the date remind them to read Chapters 5 through 10 of **Happy Together**.

Guide for Date Five

THE BLUEPRINT OF LOVE

Theme: *Christ's love for the Church is the blueprint of love.*

Key messages from Happy Together, Chapters 5 through 10: The Blueprint of Love

In these chapters the author explains how husbands and wives find the blueprint for their relationship in the loving actions of Christ for the Church. This blueprint is visible in the rituals of the seven sacraments. What we learn from Christ through the sacraments is that we grow in love when we welcome and accept each other (Baptism), keep our commitments (Confirmation), sacrifice for each other (Eucharist), forgive (Reconciliation), help each other heal (Anointing of the Sick), and serve each other, God, and our community (Holy Orders and Matrimony).

The event starts with an opening prayer, an introduction (10 to 12 minutes), and the viewing of the Date Five video (12 minutes). This is followed by 90 to 120 minutes of couples' date time, either at the parish or out in the community.

FACILITATOR'S TASKS:

1) Prepare by:

- a. Reading Chapters 5 through 10 of **Happy Together**
- b. Preview **Date Five** on the **SIX DATES** DVD
- c. Ensure you have all the materials needed (Books, Handouts, Pencils, etc)
- d. Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD Player, and create a romantic mood with music, flowers, and candles.
- e. Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet, and copies of the handout.

2) Introduction and Opening Prayer:

- a. Introduce yourself and open the evening with a prayer.
- b. Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book: **Happy Together**.
- c. Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- d. Stress the importance of keeping the evening fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during these dates. The dates are for celebrating what is good about their relationship.

2) Play the video: "The Blueprint of Love"

3) After the video:

- a. If you plan to dismiss the couples for their date away from the premises, remind them to pick up their children on time, and to prepare for the next date by reading Chapter 11 of **Happy Together**.
or
- b. If you plan for couples to stay at the parish for the full date give them directions on what to do next. At the end of the date remind them to read Chapter 11 of **Happy Together**.

Guide for Date Six

WHERE DO I FIND THE COURAGE?

Theme: *Prayer is the source of strength in our daily challenges. It opens us to receive God's graces.*

Key messages from Happy Together, Chapter 11: Where Do I Find the Courage?

The chapter explains that prayer, and in particular, the participation in the Eucharist is the nourishment that spouses need for their marital journey. The Church celebrates the blueprint of God's love in the Seven Sacraments, and commemorates such love in the rituals of the Mass. The chapter invites the readers to make their participation in each Eucharistic celebration an opportunity to remind themselves of Christ's self-giving love and to renew their vows and commitment to each other. Participation in the Mass is also an occasion to become aware of how you need God's help and grace to strengthen your relationship.

The event starts with an opening prayer, an introduction (10 to 12 minutes), and the viewing of the Date Six video (12 minutes). This is followed by 90 to 120 minutes of couples' date time, either at the parish or out in the community.

FACILITATOR'S TASKS:

1) Prepare by:

- a. Reading Chapter 11 of **Happy Together**
- b. Preview **Date Six** on the **SIX DATES** DVD
- c. Ensure you have all the materials needed (Books, Handouts, Pencils, Program Evaluation, etc)
- d. Arrange the room with chairs, a TV and a DVD Player, and create a romantic mood with music, flowers, and candles.
- e. Set up a welcome table with a sign-in sheet, and copies of the handout.

2) Introduction and Opening Prayer:

- a. Introduce yourself and open the evening with a prayer.
- b. Ensure that each couple has a copy of the book: **Happy Together**.
- c. Briefly explain the format of the program and review the schedule.
- d. Stress the importance of keeping the evening fun. Tell couples to avoid trying to solve problems during these dates. The dates are for celebrating what is good about their relationship.

3) Play the video: "Where Do I Find the Courage?"

4) After the video:

- a. If you plan to dismiss the couples for their date away from the premises, remind them to pick up their children on time, and return with a completed evaluation of the program.
or
- b. If you plan for couples to stay at the parish for the full date give them directions on what to do next.