

We hope that our speech inspires you to continue your role as Marriage Preparation facilitators. The work you are doing is truly a blessing for engaged couples

I am here to present a formal speech on what marriage Preparation was like for James and I.

Unlike me, James is here to have an interactive discussion rather than present a formal speech on what Marriage preparation was like for us.

“I DON’T NORMALLY GET A WORD IN ANYWAY”

Being a teacher, I felt that it was important to be organized and have something prepared for you on paper.

James being a ‘Self proclaimed comedian’ and it just so happens, ‘my husband’ has decided to interrupt my speech whenever he feels it appropriate.

There are 2 sayings that I would like to point out to you. One of them is ‘*Birds of a feather, flock together*’ and the other is ‘*opposites attract*’.

Before James and I met I was very aware of the saying ‘opposites attract’.

The thing is; James and I were in fact very similar and had a lot in common. We enjoyed being around the same people, we had similar family values and a strong faith in God. We enjoyed food, wine and loved keeping fit and taking part in sporting events and activities. We often ran

together and this brings me to our possible difference and that is that I could run a lot faster than him 😊

‘Birds of a feather flock together’ summed up James and me at this point. He was and still is my best friend. We have always enjoyed doing the same things together so having similarities worked for us.

On one of our Marriage Preparation sessions, we found that we were able to pick up on a lot of our differences. We discussed Bonding and dividing issues such as religion, parenting, family, sexuality and finances.

During Marriage Prep, we all had to place ourselves in an area of the room that best fit us.

James is what you might class as the ‘life of the party’ and although I would love to claim this as being my personality type, I placed myself in another corner of the room where there was a personality type that preferred ‘structure and organization’ and was able to show ‘love and compassion’. In other words, Out of love, I would organize food and wine for the party and James would eat and drink it. I guess in an unusual sort of way opposites do attract and we are continually finding out our similarities and differences today and working on them.

For most of our time together James and I have communicated our thoughts and ideas and most importantly concerns to each other. We were both very selective as to whom we went out with and because of this we talked and found out more about each other, before we committed. We

pretty much quizzed each other without actually identifying it as being that.

James and I met through friends and ended up running together over the Port Hills. What better way to have a chat. The things that we mainly discussed were the things that we valued in life.

Through our discussions, I had found someone who could relate to me. Who could appreciate the things in life that I held important. I very rarely had boyfriends and if I did, it was long enough to work the boy out and move on. James became a keeper and I could tell through our conversations that I was quite possibly a keeper too!

For us, this was a great time_in our lives. I know for me it was like living some sort of fantasy!

I had this hot chick and we were always going out for dinner. We were simply enjoying life!

Then we got engaged which was very exciting. We had everyone congratulating us and wanting to know our wedding plans. Where the wedding was, what colour the bridesmaids dresses were... All the girly stuff!

Then Marriage Preparation! What a reality Check!

I remember the first session well. The marriage educators were drumming into us that marriage requires a lot of hard work and its not all fun and games. It was a great chance to put everything into perspective. We asked ourselves and each other some really hard and honest questions. This created a lot of conversation. In doing this, we had all our cards on the table leaving no secrets for when we were married. Once we had worked our way through this, it was

very comforting to know we were heading in the right direction.

‘Marriage Preparation’ reinforced the importance of Communication’.

James and I were lucky because we were both practicing Catholics and a lot the bonding and dividing issues were based on our very similar values and beliefs.

It is important to point out that although both Catholic, our levels of faith were and still are very different and so we continue to come across issues in some of the decisions we make. The important thing is that we are able to communicate the reasons for our choices rather than keep them to ourselves even if it ends up in an argument.

Sometimes there has been the odd silent treatment, but even this can do wonders for us as it allows time to reflect on what has been said.

Silent Treatment! It is fair to say, Monique and I have had our fair share of arguments. You should have heard the arguing while preparing for this speech. What we learnt at Marriage Preparation was that as a married couple you ARE going to ARGUE. By communicating each others issues, things are seen from both sides. I quite often reflect back on marriage preparation and this reinforces the importance of keeping an open mind.

Of course, always End by saying: *“SORRY DEAR YOU WERE RIGHT”*.

The Marriage Preparation’ sessions we went on were very interactive and the other people who were attending it with us were able to openly talk about their own personal

‘bonding and dividing issues’ as they communicated their thoughts on particular subjects. We were inspired by the other couples in the group as there was a mix of Religious and Cultural backgrounds therefore there were varied issues among the group and some issues were placed more important than others. Some issues hadn’t even been discussed between the couples and the Marriage Preparation prompted discussion. It was interesting to note how people came to a common understanding.

Our marriage preparation course was taken by 4 separate couples all of whom presented engaged couples with the opportunity to concentrate on strengths and areas of growth within their relationship. We were made welcome in an environment that enabled us to take the time to get to know each other better. James and I felt it interesting listening to the experiences of those taking the course. They were very honest in what they said and gave couples an insight to the ups and downs of married life.

We have been married for nearly 5 months and already we have experienced ‘for better and for worse and ‘in sickness, and in health’.

Marriage Prep reinforced the importance of an ‘Unconditional Marriage’!

During our interactive discussions, we touched on reasons why married couples are breaking up today. An issue I always had was married couples saying: “WE JUST GREW APART”. This is where we learnt that marriage is a “Work in progress” and to make sure the

focus isn't always on you but on each other. If you stop working on your marriage, how is it supposed to grow?

Open discussions and talking about issues married couples have, gave us great direction on where we needed to head as an engaged couple preparing for marriage.

All our lives we have been surrounded by people who have set an example of what marriage is all about.

James Nana and Grandad are an important part of his life and they were married for over 50 years before his granddad passed away. My grandparents have been together for over 50 years and our parents have worked at their marriages and are still together. These people as well as others have all set the example for us. We are truly blessed to be surrounded by these people.

It's not a case of when we split up! It's not even negotiable! We are together forever and that is that! Marriage isn't just a piece of paper. It is a binding between 2 people and God.

ON BEHALF OF MONIQUE AND MYSELF, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY WHAT AN HONOUR IT HAS BEEN TO SPEAK IN FRONT OF SO MANY PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO NEWLY MARRIED COUPLES.

FOR US, MARRIAGE PREPARATION WAS A GREAT EXPERIENCE AND PREPARED US WELL FOR OUR NEW JOURNEY TOGETHER.

WE CONSIDER YOU ALL AS ROLE MODELS AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO INTERACTING WITH YOU OVER THE WEEKEND.

James and Monique Kearns