

BFM and BMP's Energize! Couples Retreat in the Pocono, Pennsylvania

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On December 7-9, 2018 in Pocono, Pennsylvania the national Blessing and Family Ministry and the [Blessed Marriage Project](#) hosted the tenth Energize! Couples Retreat, with the support of pastors and ministry leaders throughout Subregion 1. The Blessed Marriage Project (BMP) is a grassroots initiative by Blessed Couples for Blessed Couples. It seeks to provide marriage enrichment to enhance relationship satisfaction, resiliency, and vitality among Unificationist spouses at all stages of marriage.



The retreat welcomed 27 couples from all over subregion 1 and Canada. Couples attended that have been married only a few months wanting to start their marriage off on the right foot to couples married almost 50 years, looking for a refresher. It was a wonderful melting pot of backgrounds, languages and faith backgrounds. Participating couples were so appreciative of their experience at the retreat. Here are some of the reflections:

A young wife and mom of two young children, Sunmarie Burns shared:



"This retreat was a much-needed breath of fresh air—to step back from our busy lives and personal and parenting responsibilities and focus on just our relationship as a couple—something we haven't dedicated much time to recently. This retreat, as well as the first one I attended 4 years ago, has been the most impactful relationship and intimacy building tools I've ever received for my marriage. Whatever stage of life you are in, there is absolutely something to be gained at these retreats for everyone in the various classes, and the atmosphere created is truly peaceful, loving, safe, and heavenly. All couples should attend a BMP retreat at least once in a lifetime—but preferably more. I hope our church doesn't ever stop offering these programs—we need them so much and the world needs this so much. We can improve the world through this program." (Blessed 6 years)



"It was great opportunity to slow down and give some attention to our marriage. I got more aware of myself and my spouse feelings and needs. It will bring my wife and kids closer together. I would recommend this retreat because most couples have issues, one way or another from intimacy to children. And all of these issues come to light in this event."

~Husband, Blessed 36 years

"It is a very good experience where I gained new tools/ideas and ways of making relationships work. Breaking old preconceptions about roles and rules in a couple's relationship. I like the atmosphere of openness. I would recommend this retreat to another couple to make them more open in different ways of showing love and be refreshed and look forward to putting those in actions. It enhances all aspects of life—spiritually, emotionally, etc."

~Wife, 21 years Blessed

One husband Blessed for 21 years shared:

"I felt a lot of love from staff and an urge to understand and practice the content so I can truly understand the true meaning of our Blessing and lovingly take care of my children. My relationship with my wife is so key to unfold and develop a true relationship. This retreat is so important because, as a Blessed Central Family, our role as Tribal Messiahs cannot truly be successful until we become victorious as a Blessed Couple. Also, it is so important for our children to see loving parents."





The retreat included fun, informative and interactive presentations on Marriage Over a Lifetime, Keys to a Healthy Marriage, Talking Safely, Dealing with Differences, and Sex, Health, and Happiness. Presentations were given by John Williams, Crescentia DeGoede and Lena and Christoph Yasutake. All presentations included True Parents' words and exercises that gave spouses a chance to discuss what they were learning with each other, and to practice using the new skills and techniques. Participants also had the opportunity to break into groups by gender and share with one another.



"This retreat opened the door for us to talk more openly about some things without judgment or worrying about feeling foolish for having those thoughts or feelings. I really liked the breakout to talk about sex by gender with the other women. I wish I could have a similar small group on the local level so it's not like we don't talk again as sisters in that way ever again."

~Wife, Blessed 5 years

"I gained increased intimacy with my wife. I gained skills which I hope to share in my community. I made new friends and feel more connected as a community of Blessed Couples. I would totally recommend this retreat to another couple because we can go beyond our mistakes to be real as a community, we can also overcome shame related to sexuality and become more intimate as couples."

~Husband, Blessed 36 years

"The content of each session was well given and informative as well as reassuring. I liked the separate sessions with men/women. It was knowledgeable and helpful listening to others concerns and tips. This retreat validates that there are problems and situations that anyone can get help with."

~Wife Blessed 40 years



In addition to the presentations, there were several breakout sessions couples could choose from on: Talking about difficult topics, Love Currency, Improving your marriage by yourself, Rules and Roles, Romance, Couple money smarts, and the Art of Kissing. Participants shared that:

"The breakout sessions were very helpful. I learned that my spouse and I need to communicate more about how we feel loved by each other. The retreat helped my couple to open up our hearts and talk more deeply with each other about our marriage."

~Husband Blessed 21 years,

"I was able to under my husband's love language in a more meaningful way. What I gained from this retreat are the following: 1) invest more in our marriage 2) understand our differences 3) working as a team 4) be mindful with the use of words 5) be more supportive of each other. I would highly recommend this retreat to all couples. I know because this retreat helped myself and my husband to understand each other better and really helped resolve the crisis we're dealing with at this crucial time of our marriage. We are truly grateful for these opportunities." ~Wife, 17 years Blessed



On Saturday afternoon the couples had several hours to relax and enjoy each other's company while taking advantage of the on-site activities, such as ice-skating, swimming, and board games. In the evening couples got dressed up for a date night and enjoyed fine dining and entertainment of their choice. Couples were also able to connect with other couples over meals throughout the retreat.

"I had a great time at the Energize – I was always kept fully engaged, interested, and always felt like I was learning. It was awesome to have alone time with my wife and just really have the space and time to invest in each other."

Husband Blessed 6 years



On Sunday, John Williams delivered a powerful sermon on showing unconditional love to our spouses by expressing compassion and forgiveness. The sermon concluded with the couples expressing forgiveness to one another and committing to see each other from God's perspective and live for the sake of each other. A number of the couples were in tears with a renewed sense of commitment. The retreat closed with reflections, recommitment action steps, testimonies, and a group prayer. Couples also committed to supporting one another in their continued journey to invest in their marriages.



Reflecting on his experience at the retreat, Heavenly Tribal Messiah accomplisher, Joe Willet shared that,

"Active listening and power speaking not only heals couple's relationships, if used in trinities or 4-6 families together they can become a support to one another. Couples that share together and support each other who are open and vulnerable will be a powerful environment for inviting other couples to join our community of Blessed Couples. When they experience this kind of love then they trust you when you introduce the Principle."