



*The Orthodox Natural
Family Planning Association*

NFP & AN ORTHODOX VISION OF SEXUALITY

Modern natural family planning (NFP) methods help couples avoid or achieve pregnancy in cooperation with the female fertility cycle. Because spacing children with NFP works by abstinence, it encourages self-control and a proper ordering of sexuality. Knowing there are times to be together and times of abstinence can set a rhythm for a couple's common life. As with fasting from foods at certain times, there is an ascetic dimension to the lives of all Orthodox Christians, not just monks.

NFP is not simply a method of birth control—it is a countercultural way of life. Because it flows from the acceptance of fertility as a gift from God, it helps couples regain a Christian vision of sexuality in a sexually-confused world.

Because it doesn't suppress any part of a person—as contraception does, by suppressing fertility—NFP is holistic. It respects human dignity and prevents the woman from being used as an object of sexual pleasure even within a marriage relationship. Because NFP requires open communication, patience, love, and trust between husband and wife, the divorce rate of couples using NFP is very low.

NFP helps couples develop a respect for their procreative powers that enables them to become conscious co-creators with God. By heightening their awareness, it helps them to be thankful for the gift of fertility. NFP allows a full experience of marital sexuality—nothing gets in the way to block the union of the spouses. It respects the integrity of the sexual act as the “consummation” of married life—nothing is compromised by its practice.

For NFP to be effective, the participation of both spouses is required. One woman describes her experience of NFP this way:

Besides engaging both persons together, the art of periodic abstinence involves the total person of each. It includes psychic, mental and spiritual action as well as physiological consideration. While contraception is an investment of birth control in devices and chemicals, periodic continence is an investment in the whole person.

Some Orthodox Christians have dismissed NFP because of the extensive fasting rules governing sexual intercourse already in place in the Orthodox Church. They claim that there is already enough

abstinence built into the Orthodox year. On the contrary, NFP should be embraced because it is built on the same dynamic of self-control as while underlies the fasting regulations. The cycle of fasting and feasting intrinsic to it is compatible with Orthodox practice and can be seen as one answer to the need for an ascetical component within the conjugal relationship.

Because of its unique focus on the “whole person,” marital closeness, and asceticism, NFP can be a valuable element in the formation of an Orthodox Christian marriage.

*Learn about Natural Family Planning from an
Orthodox Christian perspective at www.orthodoxnfp.org*

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