

# My First Month of Marriage: 5 Things I Learned By Marrying My Opposite



My first month of marriage taught me what it means to marry someone who is very different from you.

In 2016, after doing tons of Facebook videos on courtship, I met the man that I would eventually marry. We courted using Fr. Ripperger's blueprint for courtship, dutifully following the four stages: friendship, courtship, engagement, marriage. Within [5 months](#), we were married.

We are a strange pair with totally different upbringings and temperaments. He grew up in Michigan, and I grew up in Brooklyn, NY. My background is Caribbean and his is Irish, German and English. He has a garden and guinea pigs for pets and I am a city girl who hates pets. He is an introvert and I'm... not. He is a simple guy and I like elegant things (I'm learning to live more simply). He comes from a household with two parents and I was raised by a divorced mom and grandma. He is a cradle Catholic and I am a convert.

And yet, there is one huge thing we have in common: We are devoted to our Catholic faith and helping each other get to heaven. This is huge and quite frankly, the most important.

During my first month of marriage, I learned 5 things:

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## **1) LIVING A SIMPLE LIFE IN MY FIRST MONTH OF MARRIAGE**



I'm a city girl and Joseph is a suburban dude. The suburbs of Michigan are different from the suburbs of New York City. Many NYC suburbanites commute to the City, so they still have that City edge and attitude. The suburb we live in is very quiet.

How shall I put this?

“Life is old there – older than the trees. Younger than the mountains blowing like a breeze. Country home take me home. “

Maybe I'm exaggerating, but it's like country to me.

Whereas, I had countless take-out places near me like Panda Express, Chipotle and 2 Chinese restaurants on every block, my new town lacks such accommodations. I tried some fried rice

at one Chinese spot and it failed horribly in comparison to the Brooklyn Chinese take-outs.

What this means is that I am now cooking dinner pretty much daily unless we have leftovers we can make into a meal.

Even I know that's a good thing.

## **What the heck is a compost?**

I didn't know anything about composting until I moved here. If you don't know what composting is either, read more [here](#).

I'm composting now.

Joe collects organic scraps and bits in an old plastic coffee container on the counter. That's our little [compost bin](#).

Now, I find myself dropping all sorts of things into the compost container: fruit peels, orange and lemon rinds and other vegetable bits and scraps I don't need. Even egg shells!



## **Of Gardens and Guinea pigs**

We have a garden, which is Joe's third love (God, me & the garden). I love watching him tend to the garden. When he's in the garden, I know I can spend hours on the internet and he won't even notice. Shh.

He also has some guinea pigs in the back yard, which makes him a bonafide country boy, as far as I'm concerned.

He gets such joy out of doing the simple things in life and I am learning to appreciate the same.

## **2) It Was So Worth it to Wait Until Marriage to Have Sex**

If you're on this website, then it's apparent that encouraging chastity is a big part of our mission.

I wasn't always chaste in my past relationships, so I am so thankful for the opportunity to practice what I'm preaching.

Was it easy to remain chaste during our courtship? Yes and No. We were both not only committed to avoiding sins of purity, but also to being an example for others. At the same time, there were moments when we had to flee in haste because of... hormones.

For those who ask me if it gets easier when you're older, the answer is "No" – not unless you're a eunuch. If you are a hot-blooded, breathing human being, living in a world where you are immersed in overt sexuality, it can be a struggle. Furthermore, although we didn't struggle with porn, for some, [porn](#) is a real problem and distorts intimacy.

But it was worth it.

What a pleasure it was on our honeymoon night to really KNOW each other in the biblical sense – to finally know that with God's blessing we could share our bodies.

**What if you messed up and were already intimate with your boyfriend or girlfriend?**

Those who are in a relationships where you already have been intimate in the past, it doesn't mean you should give up. That's a form of despair and comes straight from the pit of hell. Resolve to not have sex from now until marriage. You

CAN feel virginal again in your marriage bed, if you wait from now until marriage.

Every day is a chance to start over.

Waiting adds such layers and nuances to your relationship, which is usually buried under pre-marital romping. Don't you want to get to know the virtues of the person you want to marry?

### **3) Issues During the Engagement Will Magnify During the First Month of Marriage**



If I said that during the first month of marriage everything smelled like roses, I'd be lying. You know I like to keep it real.

Even before marriage, it was glaringly obvious that we did not have the same taste in food.

Joe is more of a meat and potatoes, corn-on-the-cob, apple pie guy, which is not unusual for a Michigander. I have more eclectic tastes, which is not unusual for a New Yorker. Also, my ethnic background is West Indian (Caribbean), which means I do not get along with bland food. We marinate for days.

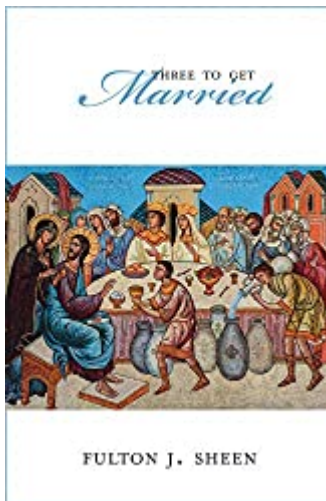
Since NYC has such a variety of foods, I love eating or making foods from other cultures, whether Italian, Asian, Caribbean, African or Middle Eastern.

Not only do we not have the same taste in foods, but Joe is a very finicky eater. He is picky about not only tastes, but textures. He doesn't like cheese on most things, so any type of pasta with cheese is a no-no and any sort of casserole that includes cheese is out. Yet, he makes homemade pizza with mozzarella and makes "fried cheese". He grows jalapenos and spinach in the garden, but won't have them in any dish except for salad. Fish is also out.

Are you shaking your heads in sympathy yet?

[Three to Get Married by Venerable Bishop Fulton J. Sheen](#)





I knew this was going to be a problem. What I didn't anticipate was how I would take it personally – almost as a rejection of my cooking skills (which are considerable, if I say so myself).

I didn't realize how stressful menu planning would be. I didn't know how I would feel boxed in and unable to be as creative as I could be. If you remove cheese and fish, sweet potatoes, avocado, casseroles, lasagna, baked ziti, rice and beans and other delicious dishes, you are left with a fairly empty cooking toolbox.

And so, this caused a bit of tension during our first month, especially since I was trying so hard to be a traditional wife.

The silver lining in this whole situation is that he is low maintenance in that he will eat leftovers for weeks straight. He likes to "use it up", which means he will repurpose the leftovers until they are all gone. He doesn't waste one drop.

Therefore, if I want to make baked ziti for myself, I can make a small portion and just put out leftovers that he likes.

This is a compromise for now.

But it's still hard and I have my moments of frustration.

The other day we were discussing how I think we are adjusting to each other's food tastes and I'm learning to make variations of what he likes, which I also enjoy. Joe said to me, "I would think part of being submissive is making the meals that your husband likes, right?" Touché.

How do some of you with picky husbands deal with menu planning?

## **4) The Rosary Changes Hearts & Make Things All Better**

Sometimes I get cranky for no reason.

Although I don't turn into a Medusa, I'm sure hormones affect my mood, especially when Aunt Flo is in town (you ladies know what I'm talking about). Men instinctively know when to stay away when we're "PMS'ing."

Ladies, the Rosary can help.

I'm not promising the glares will turn into dewy-eyed glances, but you'll be able to tolerate your husband, at least.

Pope Saint Pius X said,

*“The Rosary is the most beautiful and the richest in graces of all prayers; it is the prayer that touches most the Heart of the Mother of God...and if you wish peace to reign in your homes, recite the family Rosary.”*

We prayed the rosary on our wedding night and we hope to continue to pray it together, daily.

If you're married and you don't have a routine of praying a family rosary every day, I highly recommend it.

Even if you're single and in a serious relationship, why not pray the rosary periodically? That's better than cuddling on the couch and getting into all sorts of trouble.

## **5) During the First Month of Marriage, Being a Submissive Wife is a Process**

I know you all were dying to find out if I am in fact a submissive wife. After all I talk so much about submission.

Can a confident, assertive woman be submissive to her husband?

The answer is yes, with 2 caveats.

1) Don't force yourself to turn into a wallflower if you were never one and, 2) you're going to mess up – a lot.

You need two ingredients for success in this area: a willing heart and a patient spouse.

Sometimes when I find myself being extra assertive and taking the reins, I self-correct. When I don't notice, Joe gently lets me know. Sometimes, he says playfully, "That's not very submissiveness," which always makes me smile but it also makes me self-adjust. doesn't complain.

He knows I desire it from the depths of my heart and he supports me in this journey.

## **So, what does submission look like in my household?**

To put it simply, I do everything I can to be my husband's helpmeet. That includes tasks that I used to hate to do, like housework and cooking. I also manage the day-to-day finances. I'm sort of like the accountant, and he is the CFO.

But wait, there's more.

Being a helpmeet also involves psychological and spiritual support. That means I try to build him up and encourage him when it comes to his work and when it comes to his decisions. I support him in his masculinity, by harnessing my femininity.

The more feminine we are, the more we encourage our men to be masculine.

It's easier to do tasks than it is to mentally and spiritually support someone. It's hard for us women to go along with our men's decisions when we KNOW we're right. Right, ladies?

When I am submissive and in my feminine role at home, everything fits in place and we both are at peace.

It's a daily struggle for someone who is not naturally submissive.

Pray for me that I may improve in this area.

So these were the 5 things I learned during my first month of marriage.

My first month has been an amazing experience of growth, sacrifice and so much love that my heart wants to burst.

I have truly learned what it means to be one. Joe and I work every day on living our marriage sacramentally, with God as head. We are learning to sacrifice for each other and we are growing to love each other more every day.

In the end, it takes [three to get married](#): God, the husband and the wife.

We hope to consecrate our home to the Sacred Heart soon.

Pray for us so that we will help, and not impede, each other from getting to heaven.

What was your first month of marriage like?

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*This article was written in 2017 and updated in 2020. I may write a whole new update at the 5-year mark!*

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**Should I Marry a Non-Catholic to Save Her Soul?**



A few years ago, when I was doing a lot more coaching than I am now, someone asked me a question about courting someone non-Catholic. He was hoping that that marrying someone non-Catholic might be seen as noble in some way. I thought I'd reprint the question here along with my humble opinion.

How easily we rationalize all sorts of decisions that we know we shouldn't be making. When it comes to the heart, we can easily fool ourselves into thinking that our case is different or special.

In any case, here is the question:

*Dear Cynthia,*

*I already know your views on marrying non-Catholics; however, I really want to get married and I feel I have a lot to offer to a prospective wife, but, all the girls in my area are liberal Catholics. I feel my chances of converting a devout, non-Catholic are greater.*

*What if God wants me to marry someone to convert her? Would it be okay to marry a non-Catholic for that reason?"*

## ***Here is my response to: Should I Marry a Non-Catholic to Save her Soul:***

Dear reader, I must say your first sentence made me chuckle. You're right. I don't believe in Catholics marrying non-Catholics (mixed marriages).

But let's look at your hypothetical union.

It is true that we are to hunger for souls, which means we should be praying and sacrificing, that souls might come to the saving knowledge of the Gospel. This is a wonderful and worthy desire to have.

However, I have never seen the Church recommend marrying people to save their souls. It is a path that is fraught with danger for the Catholic, even though in some cases, the non-believing wife or husband eventually converts. We'll take a



deeper look at that scenario a little later.

There are two possible outcomes in this scenario:

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## **Best Outcome of Marrying a Non-Catholic**

The best outcome is that the non-Catholic woman you might marry will grow into the knowledge that the Catholic faith is the one true faith, and by your example, she will convert to our faith..

Some Catholics who are in mixed relationships do their best to expose the non-Catholic to all aspects of Catholicism, with the result being that the non-Catholic begins to express an interest in converting.

If he or she is truly interested in converting, then let her convert before you get married. Of course there is the possibility that she might convert to “get the man.”

I know one situation where the wife “lost her faith” (not sure if she ever had it), soon after her wedding.

# Worst Outcome of Marrying a Non-Catholic

The worst outcome of marrying a non-Catholic actually has many different sub-outcomes, including:

- She might never convert.
- She might stop attending Mass altogether once it's a done deal and she doesn't have to impress you anymore.
- She might decide she doesn't want any kids right away and start taking contraceptives, despite your disapproval.
- If you do have kids, she might refuse to have the kids baptized.
- The kids might be confused because you'll be teaching them about the faith and the mother will be teaching them to be open about religion.
- She might start to explore the [New Age](#) and other man-made religions.
- You might end up losing your faith – yes it can happen!

There is a reason why the Church of old was vehemently against mixed marriages – only giving dispensations as a last measure:

*“In an instruction to the Bishops of England, March 25 1868, the Congregation of the Propaganda declared that the above conditions are exacted by the natural and divine law to remove the intrinsic dangers in mixed marriages, but that in addition there must be some grave necessity, which cannot otherwise be avoided, for allowing the faithful to expose*

*themselves to the grave dangers inherent in these unions, even when the prescribed conditions have been fulfilled."*

[Source.](#)

You might marry a non-Catholic and have the most wonderful marriage. In fact, I know one or two couples for which this is the case. However, that outcome brings about lots of pain, when you think about your spouse never attaining the beatific vision.

I know many more couples, whose disparity of belief ended in much confusion, grief and oftentimes divorce.

I do understand how you feel because I too was tempted to go outside the Church, but God spared me that trial.

Maybe God has a nice Catholic girl for you.

You want to save souls? Go for it. You don't have to marry them, though.

God bless!

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This was my response to the question. I don't know if he ended up marrying her or not.

What are your thoughts on mixed marriages?

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## Books on Courtship & Marriage

- [Christian Courtship in an Oversexed World: A Guide for Catholics](#)
- [Clean Love in Marriage](#)
- [Dear Newlyweds, by Pope Pius XII](#)
- [Casti Connubii](#)
- [Three to Get Married by Ven. Bishop Fulton Sheen](#)
- [The Wife Desired by Fr. Leo Kinsella](#)

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**Just Because We Got Engaged  
After 5 Months of Courtship,  
Doesn't Mean You Should Too**



It's time to make this official statement: just because we got engaged after 5 months of courtship, doesn't mean you should too."

Let me tell you about someone who rushed into marriage when she shouldn't have.

Jennifer was desperate to get married, and after reading many books about courtship, she decided to pressure her boyfriend to marry her. They had been courting for 4 months and she wanted to to ensure she got her ring within 6 months!

Deep down, she knew there were a few troubling aspects of her relationship. For one thing, he was very secretive and would not allow her to touch his phone, even to use his apps. One time, she outright asked him if he was concerned she would see some sensitive texts and he teased that she was acting jealous.

The other troubling issue was that even though he told her he

had an annulment years ago, he could never quite get around to showing her the official papers.

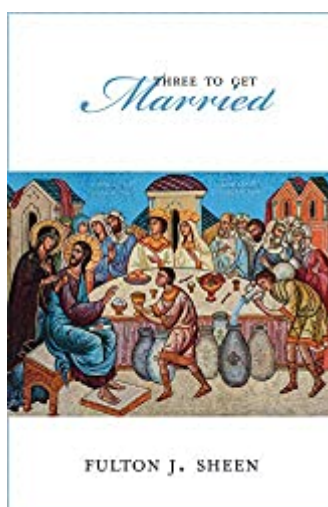
But she wanted to marry and she was afraid that 6 months would come and go with no sign of a ring.

So she pressured him until he proposed to her. He finally did show her the annulment papers and they were married within a year.

They were also separated after five months due to infidelity, and sadly divorced within a year.

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## Three to Get Married



# What Can You Learn From This Story?

Since I've been writing about courtship, I have become more and more aware that sometimes readers don't use posts as guidelines, but as literal maps.

It is important to know that these courtship guidelines are just that: guidelines.

It is true that if you are following "The Four Stages of Courtship", which I first heard about through [Fr Chad Ripperger](#), engagement usually happens around 6 months, and no longer than a year. However, your mileage may vary.

It is also true that I am really passionate about women not wasting their time. The key to not wasting your time is to get good at sorting and filtering, and knowing when it is time to move on.

The power of NEXT is tremendous.

## What if You Are Ready to Be Engaged After 5 Months?

If you go through the proper stages of courtship the proper way: friendship, courtship, engagement & marriage, it is possible you might get engaged after 5 months or 6 months, or 7.

But do not allow the length of days to force you into a bad marriage.

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## **Recommended Reading on Courtship & Marriage**

- [Dear Newlyweds, by Pope Pius XII](#)
  - [Three to Get Married By Ven. Fulton Sheen](#)
  - [Prayer to St Raphael for the Wise Choice of a Married Partner](#)
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**Check out my FB Live Surprise Engagement**

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**Courtship Passivity: A Desire to Get Married Without Action**



# is Just a Wish



Antoine de Saint-Exupery (1900-1944) was a French pioneering aviator, poet, writer and aristocrat, who penned the phrase, "A goal without action is just a wish". In the same way, a goal or desire to get married without action, is just a wish.

Wishful thinking is good because it provides you with vision, but without taking actionable steps, those dreams remain wishful thinking.

The question is, are we called to simply wish for marriage or are we called to take action and make it happen?

[otw\_shortcode\_quote border="bordered" border\_style="bordered"]"Courtship passivity is when men are generally reluctant to approach women in order to court them, or when women are not generally open to men's courtship advances, while expressing a desire for marriage. " ~Cynthia Burley[/otw\_shortcode\_quote]

Here are some common excuses for what I coin "courtship passivity".

## **If God Wants Me to Marry, He Will Send Someone My Way**

It is true that nothing happens outside of God's will, but it

doesn't mean we should sit at home waiting for someone to come-a-calling.

How will you recognize if God actually sends you someone?

Will you know because the two of you seem to have everything in common and finish each other's sentences?

Will you get chills when you're around her?

Seriously, how will you know?

The truth is that it is not always obvious. That's why you should keep an open mind when you meet new people.

## **I Want to Get Married, but I Can't Find Anyone**

Our society has its priorities backwards. The almighty career has replaced the family.



In the past, both men and women expected to either get married, enter a convent/monastery or, as a last resort, resign themselves to the single life.

Now, it seems that single is the default and you only get married after you have been dating and sleeping with your boyfriend or girlfriend for a few years. That is, if you

decide that he or she is worthy of marriage.

As a result, it is harder to find someone who has a marriage mindset.

It's hard to change people, but we can change ourselves.

You can start by making it clear to anyone who is interested in you that you are looking to marry, so as not to waste your time.

## **Since You Can't Force Anyone to Court or Marry You, What Should You Do?**

There are a few things you can do to increase your odds of finding a spouse.

### **Pray**

Everything starts with prayer. Pray that God will prepare you for your future spouse. Pray that you recognize him or her instead of letting worldly expectations blind you. Pray that you will have a chaste courtship.

Here is a [prayer](#) you can use.

## **Be Approachable**



Approachability is especially important for women, because traditionally, men are the ones who pursue.

Why would anyone approach you if you don't look approachable?

The biggest way to look approachable is to smile.

### **When You Smile, You Usually Get a Smile Back**

Marco Iacoboni, a neuroscientist at the University of California, did a study on [mirror neurons](#), which showed that when you smile at someone, he or she wants to smile too.

Mirror neurons deal with empathy and imitation. When you observe an action, and you automatically simulate that action, your mirror neurons cause that to happen.

[otw\_shortcode\_quote border\_style="bordered"]"When I see you smiling, my mirror neurons for smiling fire up, too, initiating a cascade of neural activity that evokes the feeling we typically associate with a smile. I don't need to make any inference on what you are feeling, I experience immediately and effortlessly (in a milder form, of course) what you are experiencing." See [mirror neurons](#), [/otw\_shortcode\_quote]

## Smiling Makes You More Attractive

[Psychologists at Swansea University](#) discovered a link between smiling faces and the perception of health.

According to their study, the face on the left was rated less healthy than the face on the right, simply because of a smile.



If you think about it, it makes sense.

What is one way we exhibit that all is well with us? We usually smile, laugh and look otherwise healthy, when we are well.

On the contrary, if you are experiencing health issues, you are less likely to smile.

[otw\_shortcode\_quote border\_style="bordered"]"Let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love." St Teresa of Calcutta.[/otw\_shortcode\_quote]

## Allow Yourself to be Found

Although it is possible to find someone online, chances are you will probably meet your potential spouse offline.

So yes, join online dating sites like [CatholicMatch](#), but don't stop there.

Join singles groups, attend youth fellowships, join meetups, or the choir.

Strategically place yourself anywhere members of the opposite sex can be found.

## Make Friends with Older, Married Couples

Some younger people only hang out with people their age. It's useful to hang out with older people for a number of reasons.

- Older people can give you courtship advice.
- Older people are friends with parents of single, young people.
- That's right. Older people might have friends with children who are looking to marry too!

*We may get a commission if you sign up with the service below, at no additional cost to you.*

A desire to get married is just a wish unless you are intentional and take steps to optimize your chances of meeting someone.

I hope it's clear that if you want to get married, you should wish for it but you should also take action.

It's just prudent.

Happy Courting!

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# 12 Questions to Help You Judge Marriage Compatibility



When you are seeking someone to marry, it's important to determine if there is enough marriage compatibility. Marriage compatibility defines how much you have in common. In other words, how similar are you? Those with high marriage compatibility tend to have marriages that last longer.

Your potential spouse does not have to be your clone. You don't have to like all the same things and have the same hobbies, but you should have some things in common.

A good friend of my mom's married a man who appears to be the exact opposite of her. She is outgoing. He is introverted. She loves to travel and travels several times a year. He doesn't like to travel so they take few trips together.

However, neither of them appear troubled by this apparent incompatibility. He doesn't care if she takes vacations with her friends and she doesn't complain that she wished she had a husband who travels with her.

*"What counts in making a happy marriage is not so much how*

*compatible you are but how you deal with incompatibility.”*  
~Leo Tolstoy

## **How Can You Judge If You Have High Marriage Compatibility**

Some of the questions below come from a book called “Clean Love in Courtship” by Fr Lawrence G. Lovasik.

1. What does he like to do for fun? Can you see yourself enjoying at least some of those activities?
2. Are there any habits now that not only get on your nerves, but which you find extraordinarily difficult to overlook?
3. Does he get along with your family, and you, with his?
4. Have you both sufficient health for marriage?
5. What are his habits of life: cleanliness, orderliness, good manners, good grammar?
6. What are your attitudes toward food and exercise? Is he or she a picky eater, gluten-free, vegetarian?
7. Do you agree on the roles of wives and husbands in a marriage?
8. Have you the same religion and the same standards concerning its practice?
9. Do you agree on how to raise children, including whether the wife will stay at home when children are small?
10. Do you feel at ease with each other? Are your silences comfortable?
11. Can you tolerate her faults?



12. Do you believe he will make a good parent to your future children?

Try answering these questions alone and asking your potential spouse to answer some of them? It should make for an interesting exercise.

You don't have to have everything in common to get married, but if you really have nothing in common at all, you should seriously consider whether you are meant for each other, or else you're in for a very tough time.

What kinds of questions do you ask prospective spouses?

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### **Recommended Reading**

- [Clean Love in Courtship](#)
- [Three to Get Married, by Bishop Fulton Sheen](#)

This page was originally published in 2018 and updated in 2020.