

Unexpected Treasures

Are your children precious, unique and irreplaceable gifts from God? Are each one of them chosen so perfectly and created so individually that all we, as parents, can do is stand in awe and wonder at God's great love for us? Isn't every child this same kind of treasure even if we don't necessarily *plan* for a new baby - even if that baby is a complete surprise?

Most of us like to think that we actually have some control over the conception of our children, but really, there is only one God, one Creator, and we cannot claim those titles. So, what about those families who have children pretty close together (like two children in less than two years) and especially if they use NFP? Don't people just love to make jokes about them (like maybe they are too stupid to know how to use contraception) or wonder how in the world they could let *that* happen? People act like that second baby is some terrible mistake or an *accident* because no one in her right mind would want two babies in diapers at the same time. Since we are not God, we cannot make His decisions for Him. He knows the children He wants to create, and He knows the parents He would ask to bear those children. Those unexpected treasures (the ones we worry and fret about because we don't know how we will be able to take care of another one) seem to always be such exceptional blessings that we get down on our knees and thank God for His gift and praise Him because He is so much wiser and knows so much more than we do about what we need.

When babies come close together, there is always a ton of work to be done but also a ton of joy and kisses and smiles. Another great thing is that the two siblings always have someone to play with as they grow up, and they usually turn out to be the best of friends. We can look back after those *so close together* babies grow up and wonder how we ever could have lived without them. We have to admit again that God loves us more than we could ever imagine, that His plan is always, always perfect for us, and that we are eternally grateful for His unexpected treasure. He always knows what's best for us even when we don't.

So, why are so many people afraid to trust God and to be open to His treasures, expected or unexpected? Years ago, when couples got married, they pretty much expected children to be a part of their marriage. (Most people back then actually waited to get married before they engaged in the marriage act too.) They understood that marriage and children go together very nicely and that family is extremely important. I am sure every baby born *back then* was not always convenient and easy, but the parents accepted each one as best they could, and somehow families continued to exist. Many of those families had more than one child sleeping a bedroom too. Lots of children grew up in small houses or apartments. Maybe they didn't have a lot of material things, but they had each other, and to paraphrase Pope John Paul II: sometimes the greatest gift that parents can give to their children is the gift of another brother or sister because that is a gift that will last for a very long time. As adults, aren't most of us very grateful for our brothers and sisters? (Even the ones who used to tease us, call us names and beat us up?)

Just think of all the modern conveniences that we have now and how older generations didn't even have electricity or running water. If we think it is so hard to raise children today, think about how much more difficult it must have been for them just to do everyday tasks like cooking and cleaning. We really have it quite easy these days. We have so much. Bigger houses, bigger cars, lots of gadgets, more *stuff*, but fewer children and many unhappy and broken families. Maybe God knows that most of the time children can actually help keep families strong and happy. We don't have to be so afraid of His blessings.

What if couples were open to *“just one more”* child regardless of the number of children they already had? Sterilization of human beings would never be an option if all of us were open to *“just one more”* in case God wanted to bless us with one of His unexpected treasures.

After teaching NFP for almost 25 years, I think the most important thing about NFP is that it really does help us to keep our minds and our hearts open to God’s will for us. NFP helps us to keep God at the center of marriage and to invite Him to be a part of every aspect of our lives, including the marriage act and its procreative potential. Sometimes He creates a new child when we are fertile, and sometimes He doesn’t. That is because He really is the Creator, not us. He wants us to trust Him, to have more faith in Him and to let go of our fears. An unexpected treasure might be waiting for parents who are open to *“just one more.”*

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