



When  
FERTILITY  
Feels  
LIKE  
a cross

FEMININE GENIUS MINISTRIES

# ABOUT BEKAH KNOBELOCH

Bekah is a Lincoln-native, mama of four, and wife to a mountain man from Colorado. She graduated from the University of Nebraska Medical Center (Go Huskers!) and is a registered nurse with a national certification in pediatrics. Currently, you can find her practicing nursing as a Marquette Model Natural Family Planning instructor. As the founder of Feminine Genius Ministries, LLC, Bekah's passion is to promote the education and empowerment of authentic femininity and human love. When she isn't homeschooling or teaching NFP, she loves to travel, write, and host dinner parties. She runs on coffee and the intercession of her dream team of lady saints.

Sts. Catherine of Siena, Faustina, Agnes, and a trio of Teresas (Avila, Benedicta of the Cross, and Calcutta), ora pro nobis!



TABLE OF  
**CONTENTS**

- I. Get Right with God
  - II. Identify Your Struggle
  - III. Be Real with Jesus
  - IV. Live Your Counter-Cultural  
Calling
  - V. Stop Self-Sabotaging
-

# 1

## The Cross of NFP

---

Does NFP highlight a massive design flaw?



## STEP 1

# GET RIGHT WITH GOD

*DOES NFP HIGHLIGHT A MASSIVE DESIGN FLAW?*

### **CROSSES. CAN FERTILITY BE ONE?**

*Not just infertility. That is a heavy burden to carry, for sure.*

I'm talking about us heterosexual, fertile Catholic couples who can have *All. The. Babies.* What about this might possibly be burdensome for us?

**Real quick reminder: Don't compare crosses. It's counter productive and simply exists to divide us.**

My dear friend who has had infertility for five years, and my cousin who has four kids and feels totally maxed out at 31 years old are both hurting. Why? *They are trying to navigate this broken world and understand their fertility within the confines of respect for God's design and natural law (aka: choosing moral options).*

Ah, speaking of God's design. It's my favorite "critique" of NFP.

It goes something like this: "NFP says that if you want to have a baby, you abstain when a woman is in a fertile time of the month. But that's when women biologically most want sex. Isn't that a design flaw?"

I hear you, friends. It would be a design flaw....*if that was the original design.*

Let's jump in to Genesis 2. Adam and Eve. In full union with God, walking in the garden with Him. Verses 24 and 25 tells us that God's plan was for them to become one flesh, they were both naked, and they were not ashamed. Back in Genesis 1:28, God gave them the command to be fruitful and multiply.

Sit with that for a moment.

They are in full communion with God AND sex is part of the plan.

Our sexuality and fertility were designed to be in full communion with God. Not burdensome. Not a cross.

**Enter: the fall.** The choice of Adam and Eve; the rejection of God and a life of full communion with him. THIS is what put into motion the topsy-turvy understanding we have of sexuality today. Women are either objectified for their sexuality or for their ability to bear children. Rarely are the two beautiful truths integrated.

So here we are. In God's redemption plan. With a Church helping to guide us through this world we are in until we can once again be in full communion with God.

Am I saying "suck it up, buttercup!" until heaven?

No. And maybe a little bit yes.

I am acknowledging there is no magical answer on this side of heaven. Nothing (and I mean nothing) will be 100% satisfying 100% of the time when it comes to fertility. That is our current reality.

This booklet doesn't have perfect answers. In fact, it probably just raises more questions. I want you to have peace amidst whatever your circumstances may be, and we have to correct distortions about God in order to find that peace.

This is step one and the foundational step for carrying our cross. We have to get this right. *God's original design. His original character.* The key to carrying fertility when you walk through hard seasons is entrusting your life to Jesus. But there is NO WAY I'm fully entrusting myself to someone who designed fertility to be burdensome to women and deprive us of pleasure the times we crave it most.

Thankfully, God didn't design it that way. His character is the same as it was when Adam and Eve were in full communion with Him. Circumstances have changed a bit; we aren't exactly living in Eden. God is the same, though. Trustworthy. Merciful. Wanting us to have abundant life.

You have to trust God's character and understand His original design.

I don't know the details of His original design. Would 12 kids somehow not be overwhelming? Would women have increased sex drive in the luteal phase? There's no way to know the specifics, aside from one thing of which I am confident. **Our wills would align with God's will.**

*Allowing God's will to be my will.* This communion of wills is what was lost in the fall. And it's a key factor in whether there is peace or discord in our hearts around fertility. Aligning is a constantly active state, though. It's not a finish line we are able to cross until we reach heaven.

Sometimes I'm cruising along with peace and understanding, and then I get 21 high days in a row, and I remember the beast that is postpartum NFP charting.

In those times, **I have to return to this step.** I must ground myself in this firm foundation-- I must realign my will. God is a loving, merciful father. *If a wound or fear or sin is preventing me from knowing this truth, that must be addressed first— through prayer, spiritual direction, therapy, or whatever is needed.*

Only then can I move on to the next steps of entrusting my fertility to Jesus, accepting my counter cultural calling, and being a light to the world.

# Reflection

---

- *Do I believe God wants what is best for me?*
  - *What misconceptions do I have about God's character?*
  - *What wounds do I have in need of healing for me to fully trust God? What help do I need to seek for effective healing?*
- 

*"If God is who He says He is, then you are who He says you are." -Fr. Mike Schmitz*

# 2

## The Cross of NFP

---

Wait, you aren't frolicking through a meadow?



## STEP TWO

# IDENTIFY YOUR STRUGGLE

**AH, THE ELUSIVE IMAGE ON AN NFP PAMPHLET.**

*WAIT, YOU AREN'T FROLICKING THROUGH A MEADOW?*

*A couple, hand in hand, either gazing into each other's eyes as the sun sets on them or dancing through a field of golden wheat.*

THIS is the promise of NFP, right?

Practice it, and you'll have a less than 5% chance of divorce.

Practice it, and you'll have excellent communication and strength in your marriage.

Practice it, and you'll marvel at the beauty of marital intimacy.

*It's just the BEST THING EVER! according to the lead couples at your marriage prep weekend.*

*And then it's not. And you look a lot more like the photo above than those pamphlets.*

*"What are we doing wrong?!" you find yourself thinking. "It isn't supposed to be like this."*

Although I've only been an instructor for about five years, I am hereby apologizing on behalf of any other NFP instructor in your life who sold you NFP rather than teaching it to you.

Before I say much more, I want to affirmatively acknowledge that there are awesome health benefits. The American Academy of Pediatrics says a menstrual cycle should be considered a vital sign for a girl because it reveals THAT MUCH about her health status. NFP also provides an opportunity in marriage for self sacrifice, communication skills, and strength. *An opportunity does not equal magic pixie dust, though.* It takes work.

The problem with placing our NFP practice on the foundation of health or marital benefits is that **those are not guaranteed**. They can also be fleeting. You can have a really challenging medical problem so it takes time, effort, patience, money, etc. to sort it out. You can be in a challenging season of marriage where you're barely surviving and don't see great communication or strength building. If these situations last too long, you become weary. With weariness comes two options: push through and continue NFP begrudgingly because "the Church says so." Or ditch NFP all together and go a different route (i.e. contraception). I chose the latter for about 10 years.

If health and marital benefits are great \*effects\* of NFP, what is the proper foundation?

If you are practicing NFP for religious reasons, you likely have some Biblical truths guiding your life. So let's look at what Jesus calls the greatest commandment in Matthew 22, verse 37.

Jesus replied: *“Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*

I'm pretty sure I got that verse as a piece of wall decor for my wedding, but it needs to be more relevant in our lives than just a phrase for home goods.

*HOW do we love God with all that we are?*

It hit me when we were baptizing our sweet baby Jude (on the feast of St. Jude!). He was becoming an adopted child of God. And we were promising to reject Satan, all his evil works, all his empty promises. In fact, we repeat those baptismal promises every Easter!

That is the core of loving God: **rejecting that which is not of Him**. Rejecting sin.

Two consistent components of NFP are:

-needing to plan a pregnancy (either achieve or avoid) and  
-rejecting a sin against sexuality (contraception, certain infertility treatments, etc.)

*out of a love for God and rejecting that which is not of Him.*

I propose the following scenario to couples who learn NFP from me:

*"Imagine NFP doesn't exist. You need to avoid pregnancy, and you reject contraception (out of love for God). What do you do?"*

(crickets) *"Abstain.... all. the. time."*

Usually there are a few sideways glances.

So, naturally, I repeat it just for dramatic effect.

Then I introduce the idea of NFP.

*"Now you know which days you are fertile, and you can confidently use the other days of the month for intimacy."*

Despite getting a false reputation for being anti-sex, the Church doesn't want married couples constantly abstaining for months on end. *Sex is an incredible gift!* Nor does the Church teach that couples need to be constantly trying to have as many babies as possible. That's actually objectifying the sexual act in a way that does not accurately reflect the fullness of God's original design.

My prayer for all of my clients and readers is that you find NFP to bear much fruit in your life. Please share your witness with others if you are loving the NFP lifestyle!

However, when you have a season that comes down to nothing more than *"we need to avoid pregnancy, and we reject the sin of contraception because we love God and reject that which is not of him (sin). But otherwise this is really hard for us right now."*

That's ok. You are not alone. I hope that season passes quickly for you. You aren't a failure at NFP or a bad Catholic couple. *Jesus saved us through a crucifixion, not by skipping through a meadow.*

## Marathons

I like to think about people who run marathons. I am not that person. I will run if being chased. *Maybe.*

My friends who run marathons are honest about the work that goes in to it. They are proud of their accomplishments and the rewards. "Runners high" is a real phenomenon, but most runners will admit to days when their legs feel like bricks being pulled through wet concrete.

Running is a discipline. NFP is a discipline. **Disciplines take work.** It doesn't diminish the value of the discipline to admit to and recognize the work involved.

In the case of NFP, when you feel no other benefits, you can rest in the peace of knowing that you are loving God with all that you have and rejecting sin out of that love for Him, just as we are commanded to do. I don't expect that to make it much easier. Certain seasons are downright awful (*hey, breastfeeding postpartum transition, I'm looking RIGHT AT YOU!*).

You are not alone. Have peace in the knowledge that at least one other Catholic couple out there isn't laughing their way through Scrabble dates during the fertile window. Solidarity, my friends!

# Reflection

---

- *Why are you practicing NFP right now? Are there health benefits? Marriage benefits? Or simply needing to space kids and avoiding contraception?*
  - *What are your expectations about the work of the NFP lifestyle? Do you need to adjust how much you expect it to take?*
  - *What is a reasonable picture for your marriage incorporating the NFP lifestyle? Try to come up with three elements, acknowledging the work as well as the benefit, for your relationship.*
- 

*"The love of a husband and wife is the force that welds society together." -St. John Chrysostom*

# 3

The Cross of NFP

---

Be Real with Jesus



## CHAPTER 3

# BE REAL WITH JESUS

## “ARE YOU EFFING KIDDING ME?”

*Perhaps not the most eloquent prayer.*

Nor is it the way I should speak to the Creator of the universe. But alas, the cry of my heart sometimes sounds eerily similar to my angsty 15 year old self.

*“Whatever, Jesus.”*

This, I hate to admit, is my usual response. It’s raw. And it’s real.

Jesus can handle my anger. My frustration. My doubt and fear.

**Jesus can handle YOUR anger. YOUR frustration. YOUR doubt and fear.**

After a few days, I come around and have peace with what is being asked of me. He is patient with me, and I am taking (baby) steps toward to an immediate response of “yes, Lord,” that doesn’t require a nuclear grace bomb.

Quick recap: Step one is to make sure you understand God's character and His original design. Step two is admit that you're having a hard time and acknowledge the heaviness of your burden.

Now, step three, it's time to invite Jesus in.

That may sound like a pious answer. Lucky for you, *that's not how I roll.*

Think about our hearts for a minute. They're messy. And complicated. Not particularly pious. This is not an invitation to the tidied up house, frantically cleaned while whipping up a batch of brownies to give an impression of "having it all together."

No, this invitation is the kind where you allow someone to come over when you haven't showered in three days, the children are in the same pajamas from two nights ago, they are jumping on the couch yelling something about Neverland Pirates fighting Daniel Tiger, and you're throwing goldfish across the room to keep your feral offspring out of your bubble while staring into your cold coffee cup. It was reheated twice, maybe three times (or was that yesterday?) and is cold again.

**THAT place in your heart is the mess where fear, obsessive control, and unholy self reliance comes from.** THAT hot mess is where Jesus needs to go. He won't force himself, though. He waits to be invited. In case you're curious, He does accept invitations sprinkled with colorful language. #noexcuses

## What will He do, once He steps in to the mess?

That's the beauty of individual relationships with Christ. *He knows my needs are different than yours.*

It is impossible to let Him in to the messiest parts of my heart when I doubt His goodness. In those moments of doubt, I have to go back to step 1: God's character and original design. Fertility and family planning are complicated, fluid aspects of our hearts. I can go from peace to anxiety and back to peace during one Johnson&Johnson Mother's Day commercial. Sometimes my feelings around my fertility even provoke shame. *What if I tell the Lord I don't want 8 kids? Will He think I'm a bad Catholic mother?* (Spoiler alert: He already knows what's in the depths of my heart. Admitting it in prayer won't surprise Him.)

If I'm stuck in a place of denial, I can't effectively bring this cross to Him. Both steps 1 and 2 are crucial to have a no-holds-barred encounter with Our Lord where He can step in and pour His graces in to YOU— in a unique way that will touch your heart.

Give it a try. Today. No flowery language. *(This coming from the queen of eloquently-worded, semi-vague confessions.)* Don't minimize what you're feeling-- good or bad. Just be you. He made you that way. He delights in you just as He made you. So let him in to the space with His authentic, complicated, and sometimes messy, beloved child.

# Reflection

---

- *Do you tell Jesus all of the real feelings you have? Anger? Resentment? Fear?*
  - *What will He do if you allow Him in to your mess? Ask Him. What does He say?*
  - *After you give an unedited version of events to Jesus, sit quietly for at least 10 minutes. What does He say back to you?*
- 

*"In my deepest wound I saw your glory, and it dazzled me."  
St. Augustine*

# 4

## The Cross of NFP

---

You aren't going to fit in  
(and other non-comforting  
platitudes)



## STEP FOUR

# YOU AREN'T GOING TO FIT IN

AND CHOCOLATE CAKE.

**“NFP CAN HAVE THE SAME EFFECTIVENESS AS HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION.”**

*This is a line often touted by NFP advocates to claim our place within the current contraceptive culture. There is one problem with this mindset, though.*

**We don't fit in amongst the contraceptive culture.**

At a basic level, the Catholic definition of contraception excludes NFP. *“The use of artificial means to deliberately prevent conception.”*

NFP is not artificial. This important distinction separates it from contraception.

Yes, NFP can be used to avoid pregnancy. In those times, couples are still (and this is the key) cooperating with God's design and natural law.

It looks very different to practice NFP every day compared to having an IUD inserted and forgetting about it for 5 years. Practicing NFP is a lifestyle and a discipline.

NFP requires commitment, diligence, communication, self mastery, and self discipline. Discipline is a good thing! Insert any of the following in place of “NFP,” and I’m sure you’ll nod in agreement: training for a marathon, graduating medical or law school, winning a national championship, getting a novel published, etc.

However, society at large does not see a benefit to exerting the same discipline that leads to a law degree over sexual desires. Exercising this discipline is going to seem strange and stand out in today's culture of casual, on-demand sex. Being different from the current norm doesn't make NFP wrong.

Uncomfortable to discuss at times with your friends who contracept? Sure.

The reason you are the recipient of jokes about family size and 15 passenger vans? Perhaps.

*But **natural law** is on your side.*

The Church, in her acceptance of natural family planning, is simply defending natural law: truth inherent to creation as God made it. And the beatitudes affirm the holiness hidden in the rude comments, “*Blessed are you when they insult you...because of me.*”

My go-to analogy for this involves **chocolate cake**.

When you eat chocolate cake, there are biological and pleasurable consequences. There are calories, fat, and sugar which will have an effect on your blood sugar, glucose stores, and eventually your waistline, if you eat it too often.

There are also pleasurable effects that can be objectively detected. Brain scans would show pleasure centers activated when eating chocolate cake (or tacos or bacon...).

Same goes for sex. Biological consequence: egg and sperm can meet, fertilization can occur, and conception can result.

And sex is pleasurable! A brain scan would also indicate pleasure centers activated as dopamine was released. Oxytocin spikes and creates a bond between the sexual partners.

Now, back to the chocolate cake. (Not a euphemism for sex. Real chocolate cake.) If you separate the two objective truths, you say *"I want to have this solely for pleasure without the biological consequences. I'm going to eat it for the delicious taste and then throw it up so I don't have the caloric consequences."*

Well, that is disordered eating. We understand this is not a healthy way to consume food as it disrupts the process of eating and digestion as it was intended for our bodies.

Yet many people don't see any issue with separating objective biological and pleasurable natural laws of sex.

There are consequences to this disruption just as there are with eating.

To be clear, separating these truths the other way, focusing solely on the procreative biological aspect and removing all pleasure and unity from sex, is also an approach that denies a foundational aspect of its design.

**We are called to be a light to the world; salt of the earth.** That doesn't mean we beat others over the head with our beliefs. It means we bring them to the truth. Not the truth as a concept; **the Truth as a person.**

*Sidenote for the Catholics: We eat this person. Every Sunday. In the Eucharist. As Catholics, we believe in the true presence, and that's some crazy stuff to anyone on the outside looking in. So if you expect to fit in, NFP isn't the only eyebrow-raising practice in your life.*

We live life with joy in accordance to the Truth. We respect natural law as God created it and wrote it on our hearts. It happens to be very counter cultural right now, so we embrace that as authentically and joyfully as we can.

The world is searching for love. Authentic love. We know who He (Love) is. Our society needs a serious reality check when it comes to love. *Love is not pleasure without sacrifice.*

Yeah, NFP can be hard. Life is hard. When we get right with God so we can open our hearts in a vulnerable way to admit what is weighing us down, we can then entrust ourselves to Him and walk through this life much less concerned with fitting in. As we learn to live authentically, joy can enter our hearts, and joy is contagious.

Over time, we find ourselves not fitting in because the world around us is dark, and we have become a light.

# Reflection

---

- *About whose opinion am I concerned?*
  - *In what area of life have I embraced discipline to achieve success? How did I cope with temptations to break that discipline?*
  - *How comfortable am I with going against the grain? How important is it to me to blend in and be unnoticed?*
- 

*“The world offers you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness.” -Pope Benedict XVI*

# 5

The Cross of NFP

---

Stop self-sabotaging



## STEP FIVE

# STOP SELF-SABOTAGING

*PORN AND NFP CANNOT RESIDE TOGETHER*

**CONTRACEPTION IS OFTEN THE FOCUS WHEN DISCUSSING THE MERITS OF FERTILITY AWARENESS OR NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING.**

*Rightfully so-- it is the common "solution" given to any female health problem, despite the fact that it carries many of its own risks and consequences.*

There is something else, though, that undermines the truth, beauty, and goodness of the organic, holistic sexual intimacy that natural family planning supports. It is so pervasive in our society that I would argue it has changed the way an entire generation understands sex.

**Pornography.**

Many will state that it has been around in some form for thousands of years. Perhaps. But an explicit hieroglyph or a still shot photo is vastly different than the hardcore videos available today in the pocket of anyone with a smartphone. *The average age of exposure to pornography is between 8-11 years old, depending on your source.* I saw porn for the first time around age 10 at a friend's house. And that was 20+ years ago.

I remember guys in my high school class "giving up" porn and masturbation for lent. Not because they actually saw a problem with it, more as a joke. We had computers then, but our phones were the Nokia 3360. You could text from your pocket in class because you knew how many times to press the "3" to type the letter "e." The phone could not access the internet. The best you got for entertainment was Snake II, if you were fancy

Now, kids have an x-rated theater in their pocket as soon as they get an unfiltered, unlocked smartphone.

With such a young average age of exposure and only recent education available to parents on how to foster conversations with children about this topic, **many millenials lived close to a decade under the influence of pornography before they ever reached adulthood.** Over half of a college's freshman's life has the potential to be formed by the addictive, dangerous drug of internet pornography. These effects take time and effort to remedy.

There is no magic marriage vow or NFP pixie dust to sprinkle and erase the damage. Marriage does not fix a pornography addiction. Even if the behavior stops, the formation of what sex is has been defined and built around the false promises that make porn so appealing.

Porn says sex is about pleasure without sacrifice. You don't need to overcome the fact that you just fought about the car repair bill. Or take the time to find out what turns on your spouse or (more importantly) what instantly turns him/her off. There is always someone waiting to do whatever you desire, and it requires no sacrifice from you.

Modern pornography often involves the use of another human being, typically through a digital medium, for your own sexual pleasure. Pope St. John Paul II told us that *“the opposite of love is use.”*

Pornography forms our understanding of sexual intimacy to be focused around the use of another person for our personal satisfaction. *Whenever I want, wherever I want, in whatever fantasy I can conjure up*

*Natural Family Planning, on the other hand, fosters authentic love.*

“To love is to will the good of another.”-St. Thomas Aquinas.

Where pornography says sex is about consuming the dignity of another for your own pleasure, love says “I want what is best for you. Not just what feels good to me.”

NFP recognizes there are two whole people with all of their own thoughts, fears, hopes, and desires. Both of whom must be respected and fully present in any sexual act. Not only that, but if you're trying to avoid a pregnancy, there will be days of saying no to sexual impulses. In those seasons of life, sex is not available whenever you want.

And you know what? Sometimes (often times) a season of abstinence is a good thing. Don't get me wrong, it isn't easy—which is often the case with good things. Because as hard as abstinence is, it has also been freeing.

There was real injury to my marriage from pornography, and that injury validated wounds from childhood. In these situations, it can be easier to always be "available." There is less worry about pornography because "(s)he can be with me instead."

**Newsflash: a partner looking at porn has nothing to do with how often you are available for sex.**

When one spouse is fearful of the period of abstinence and lamenting how "unfair" it is to the other party, it's often a reflection of our societal shift toward porn sex—that sex should be on demand with minimal limitations. If NFP is "hurting your marriage," expectations surrounding sex need some adjustment. Will abstinence be hard? Absolutely. Frustrating? No doubt. But if it's *hurting your marriage*? Based on my personal experience and that of having worked with over 500 couples, I'd venture to guess you're applying society's expectations of sex to the NFP lifestyle.

You may need to recalibrate your understanding of the trustworthiness of God or the point of sex or something. Satan's oldest trick is to whisper the lie, *"God is not good. He is not trustworthy."* In NFP language, *"If he says this is how you space kids, he doesn't want what is best for you."*

If those are the thoughts, take it from someone who listened to the lies for too long. Get yo' self to a spiritual director, therapist, or someone you trust. Do not pass go. Do not collect \$200. **You need to reset the foundation, rewire your priorities, and rewrite the narrative in your head about the purpose of sex.**

First of all, God did not design fertility to be the difficulty many of us experience. See: Chapter 1.

For many years I thought God, the Church's antiquated views, and NFP were all ruining my marriage. The reality, though? Sin. Lack of self control. Lust. Selfishness. Pornography. Addiction. Trauma. Lies I believed from the evil one. These were hurting my marriage. NFP simply brought them to the surface (once I stopped blaming it) and required I deal with these issues head-on.

Natural Family Planning is a crucible in a relationship. It brings to the surface all of the impurities so they can be addressed. Contraception and sterilization, on the other hand, allow the destructive porn-influenced mentality toward sex to be masked. With contraception, there is not a natural time each month to question motivations for sexual intimacy— whereas NFP builds in a regular checkpoint to consider motives, intentions, and thoughts around sex.

With a society that celebrates love as pleasure without sacrifice, this question-- "*Am I loving this person? Or am I using him/her solely for my own desires?*" -- needs to be asked often

**Pornography will poison the relationship where NFP is seeking to bear fruit.** It must be rooted out— down to its foundation— and that space replaced with *connection, communication, and healing*. Then, the fruit of natural family planning has a chance to blossom, and chances are, it will be more vibrant than ever.

I caution engaged couples to get any issue with pornography dealt with ASAP. It requires time for the brain to re-wire, spiritual healing, and new emotional coping mechanisms. Depending on the duration and severity of the porn use, it can take intentional education, time, and energy to learn a natural, healthy understanding of sex.

# Reflection

---

*What can you do if pornography (or a history of porn use) is affecting your marital intimacy and ability to live out the NFP lifestyle?*

- 1. Seek out help. A priest, a therapist, a friend, a 12 step group. You may need a whole tribe. Don't for one second believe you are the only one. Satan will try to pin you in a corner with that lie-- and it comes from the pit of hell.*
  - 2. Give yourself-- and your relationship-- time. One, two, or three years of intense work is necessary, but also just the beginning of rewriting one, two, or three DECADES of neural pathways formed under the influence of pornography.*
  - 3. Believe that you can-- and should-- live in a healthy relationship with a healthy understanding of sexual intimacy. It takes intentional action to eliminate pornography and heal its effects on a relationship. But it's possible-- and incredibly freeing when you see that reality in your marriage.*
-

# Prayer for Couples using Natural Family Planning

O Jesus! Merciful and generous to allow co-creation with You, hear me.

For the times I did not trust in Your love for me, Jesus, have mercy on me.  
For the times I lost sight of my spouse's whole person, Jesus, have mercy on me.  
For the times I reduced spouse to his/her fertility status, Jesus, have mercy on me.  
For the times I have grumbled, been angry, or despairing, Jesus, have mercy on me.

From the desire to be in control, deliver me, Jesus.  
From the fear of what my friends and family will say, deliver me, Jesus.  
From the fear of being judged, deliver me, Jesus.  
From the spirit of selfishness, deliver me, Jesus.  
From the spirit of self-righteousness, deliver me, Jesus.  
From the desire to impress others, deliver me, Jesus.  
From the spirit of resentment, deliver me, Jesus.  
From the fear of pregnancy, deliver me, Jesus.  
From the fear of miscarriage, deliver me, Jesus.  
From the wounds, baggage, and pain of my past, deliver me, Jesus.  
From a fear of intimacy, deliver me, Jesus.

That I may desire sexual intimacy with my spouse at the times we are able to be together,  
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.  
That I may lovingly exhibit self control, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.  
That my heart will be receptive, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.  
That I will be open to Your will, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That we may develop genuine, non-sexual intimacy, Lord, hear our prayer.  
That we may learn and live out holy, healthy sexual intimacy, Lord, hear our prayer.

**FeminineGeniusMinistries**

*Amen.*