

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY PARENT INTRO

When it comes to the topic of human sexuality, some parents have given their teenagers numerous talks on sex. Others are terrified to even mention the subject. Regardless of where you fall on this spectrum, we hope this Parent's Guide will empower you to communicate effectively with your teen. Research shows that the majority of adults (ninety-one percent) and teens (eighty-seven percent) think that it would be easier for teens to be abstinent if they could discuss the topic of sexuality with their parents. However, nearly forty percent of teens say they have not had a single conversation about the issue with their parents! The bottom line is simple: If you do not talk to your teens about the meaning of human sexuality and love, the world will fill the void of your silence with a message contrary to what the Bible teaches.

No parent is unaware of the constant IV drip of indulgence, instant gratification, and lust that pours into the minds of teenagers through the noise of cell phones, the Internet, and television. It is enough to make some parents feel immobilized, as if they have no chance to compete. In fact, the average teenager consumes nine hours of media per day! That is more time than a teen spends in the classroom each day.

That said, we have more influence as parents than we might believe. Even if your teen is simultaneously text-messaging a friend, watching TV, listening to music, doing homework, and rolling their eyes at you, their heart is open. The noise of the world will never drown out the love you express to them on a daily basis. Although young people often act as if they want to be left alone, they are actually pining for interference from Dad and Mom. They are searching for love and meaning in their lives. It is for these very reasons that we have designed this program.

Because young people seem to have a limitless appetite for idealism and love, they must be offered a guide that will help them fulfill these noble desires. The Theology of the Body explains that the road map to discovering our purpose in life is closer than we might have ever imagined.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY IS NOT JUST FOR TEENS

As you read through these pages, open your heart to the ways in which these teachings might impact your own relationships and family life. The Theology of the Body is meant for every person, regardless of age or marital status.

Many times people see the teaching of the Bible on morality as old fashioned or outdated. Something from a different time or different culture, but this is not so. Often we feel that these rules are passed down from uncaring pastors who don't identify with reality. However, the beauty of the Theology of the body is that it presents human sexuality as something that is good and that when understood correctly comes from the heart and not from a list of rules

Although the idea of teaching theology to your teenager may seem intimidating, you do not need a degree in the subject to communicate these truths to your son or daughter. Your love for him or her can make this program come to life for your teen. In fact, nothing teaches a child to love as eloquently as a parent who loves unconditionally. As the saying goes, "Although your children may not always obey you, they will never fail to imitate you."

Some parents hesitate to talk to their teens about sex out of fear that they will ask probing personal questions such as, "Well, were you a virgin when you got married?" While some parents may have no

reason to fear such an interrogation, many allow their pasts to paralyze them. What you as a parent must realize is that the source of your authority does not come from your perfection—or lack thereof. It comes from the fact that you are the parent. If you have made mistakes in the past, and you have repented of them, you have nothing to fear. You can use those experiences to teach your teen to make better decisions. Either way, parents must overcome their insecurities when it comes to talking to their teenagers about sex. For their sakes, we cannot afford to be silent.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY IS NOT JUST ABOUT CHASTITY

Although the Theology of the Body spends significant time exploring human sexuality, the ideas taught extend far beyond just sex. In summary, it is an explanation of what it means to be a human person made in the image and likeness of God.

The permissive shift of cultural norms in the Western world regarding sexuality in the last couple of generations is largely a result of a misunderstanding of human identity. John Paul II saw humanity in the midst of an identity crisis. He knew that a person who does not know who he or she is, lacks a compass. The Theology of the Body offers a rich understanding of identity that informs a right notion of sexuality.

At no time are the questions about identity and sexuality more pressing than during the teen years. Your child will be asking him- or herself a barrage of profound questions, such as: *Who am I? What is the meaning of life? What is love? What do my attractions have to do with my identity? What am I supposed to do with my life?* If they are asking themselves such important questions, it is essential that they be offered sufficient and robust answers.

Although the teen years are often characterized by self-absorption, this egocentric focus offers parents and teachers a unique window to invite them to discover the answer to one of life's most fundamental questions: "Who are YOU?" The goal of this program is to use the Theology of the Body to help them answer this question, so they can become who God created them to be.