

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY *for Teens*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the Theology of the Body?

The Theology of the Body refers to the series of 129 lectures given by Pope John Paul II during his Wednesday audiences in Rome between September 1979 and November 1984. These addresses were later compiled and published as a single work entitled *The Theology of the Body According to John Paul II* (now called *Male and Female He Created Them*). The Theology of the Body covers such topics as the bodily dimension of the human person, the nature of human sexuality, the human need for communion, and the nature of marriage.

The Theology of the Body is an articulation of the faith that is intended to enrich the lives of all people. Commentator Emily Stimpson describes it in this way:

“The Theology of the Body is more than an exposition of the Church’s teachings on human sexuality. It is, in fact, the Catholic sacramental worldview, understood, structured, and articulated for a culture plagued by a diseased understanding of man. When properly understood and truly lived, that worldview has the power to transform the way men and women understand their bodies and their souls, their masculinity and femininity, their vocation in this life, and their destiny in the next” (*Franciscan Way*, Autumn 2007).

2. Is this something that will really interest teens?

Absolutely! Many teens do not understand their sexuality, let alone their purpose in life, yet they have a strong desire to do so. The Theology of the Body speaks to the deepest meaning of why they were created, the purpose of love and sexuality, and the meaning of life.

Not only will teens be interested in the Theology of the Body, they crave it—even though they may not know it at a cognitive level. Teens are yearning for answers to life’s deepest questions, as well as a positive portrayal of their sexuality. John Paul II’s vision for the meaning of our bodies and our sexual desires is a topic that will connect with teens in a way that speaks to the deepest desires of their hearts.

3. What is the *Theology of the Body for Teens* program?

The *Theology of the Body for Teens* is the first published curriculum which applies the Theology of the Body to the lives of teenagers, specifically addressing questions relating to chastity and sexuality. It is a multifaceted, twelve-part program that can be used in a variety of different contexts.

4. Is this a chastity program?

Yes, but it is also much more. While *Theology of the Body for Teens* addresses for teenagers the real questions they have about their sexuality, it is much more comprehensive than traditional chastity programs. Such programs often take a “no” approach to sex, placing an emphasis on abstinence. This, of course, is good, but the Theology of the Body language offers us much more. It offers us a new language that is rooted in human freedom. The TOB looks at the human experience and proposes to each of us a vision for love and life that resonates in a profound and satisfying way. In short, it is a very positive presentation of the gift of human sexuality.

5. If I am already running a chastity program, should I still introduce my teenagers to the Theology of the Body?

Absolutely. The Theology of the Body is not just about sexual virtue but sexual meaning. It is this meaning that provides one with the understanding and tools to develop sexual virtue as a result of an appreciation of God's plan for their lives. Even still, the understanding of sexuality offered through the pope's "new language" of the Theology of the Body will greatly enhance any chastity outreach you are currently doing.

6. Why do teens need the Theology of the Body?

Human beings were made for greatness. We were made to know God, know truth, and live life in a way that brings us peace and happiness. These pursuits, though, are hard to come by in today's distracting and permissive culture. As a result, it is perhaps harder to live as a teenager today than at any other time. The wounds our teenagers experience are deep and manifold.

Today's teens are starving for real love; they are looking for meaningful and lasting relationships. They have witnessed firsthand the pain of divorce and seen how permissive sex plays out in their own lives and the lives of those around them. Due to our culture's focus on immediate gratification, many teens have lost their way, and in the process, have lost hope. The Theology of the Body will help restore their hope because it reveals for them a road map to real love and authentic happiness.

7. What will *Theology of the Body for Teens* do for my students?

Theology of the Body for Teens will help them understand the meaning of their lives. It will answer the questions they have about their own bodies, about the Church's teachings on sexual morality, and how they were created for greatness. This curriculum will help them to unlearn the misguided teachings of the modern culture and provide them with the very key to life—the key to happiness and peace. It will help them discover the ultimate purpose for which God created them—communion with him.

8. Will this curriculum make them feel guilty about bad decisions from their past?

The beauty of the Theology of the Body is that it brings hope to the hopeless and redemption to the fallen. While some teens may become convicted by the truths they hear and feel sad or guilty for past decisions, they will ultimately feel free and be filled with hope as they pursue God's plan for love and life.

9. Is this curriculum designed for youth groups, high schools, or parish CCD programs?

All of the above. *Theology of the Body for Teens* works anywhere teens meet. It can be used in a high school class, a youth group study, a CCD program, home school study or as an after-school program.

10. What is the age range recommended for *Theology of the Body for Teens*?

This curriculum is intended for all teenagers (i.e., ages thirteen through nineteen). Discretion should always be exercised, though, when discussing topics related to sexuality as attitudes on the part of parents greatly vary. We recommend you seek the appropriate approvals before conducting any chastity program.

11. Is there a particular grade level this program works best with?

Our experience has shown that *Theology of the Body for Teens* is most suitable for use with tenth and eleventh-grade students. Nonetheless, as we noted in the previous answer, this program will edify all teens—indeed, people of all ages. As many high-school religious education curricula present the topic of vocations in twelfth grade, *TOB for Teens* is ideal for high-school seniors as well.

12. Would it work with ninth-graders?

Yes, for mature ninth-grade students. Because the curriculum covers sensitive topics and involves rich theological and philosophical concepts, the maturity level of your ninth-grade students needs to be carefully considered.

13. Aren't the concepts taught in the *Theology of the Body* too lofty for teens?

No. The authors of this program have many years of experience in youth ministry and education. Based on this experience, great consideration was given in writing *TOB for Teens* to match the current faith formation level of today's Catholic teenager. The students may, at times, be challenged by the *Theology of the Body*, but its content is perfectly suited for a Catholic teenage audience.

14. How explicit is the material covered in *Theology of the Body for Teens*?

Our curriculum is faithful to the language of John Paul II's original lectures. As such, it presents the Church's teachings human sexuality using specific—but never overly explicit or graphic—language. Therefore, we believe that its content is appropriate for the maturity level of the average Catholic teen.

15. Does *Theology of the Body for Teens* address such sensitive topics as homosexuality, masturbation, pornography, and contraception?

Yes. As mentioned above, this curriculum presents Catholic teaching on these topics and others, such as *in vitro* fertilization and artificial insemination, always with great pastoral sensitivity. Since most Catholic teenagers are aware of such issues in today's culture, we thought it was important to address them.

16. Is the *Theology of the Body for Teens* "pastorally sensitive"?

Absolutely. We realize that there are a number of difficult issues teenagers face in regards to love, sex, relationships, and marriage. We have made every effort to teach teens the truths of the *Theology of the Body*, keeping in mind the challenges young people face today.

17. Is there any prerequisite learning my teenagers should do before engaging the *Theology of the Body for Teens* curriculum?

No. *Theology of the Body for Teens* is a stand-alone program that will be understood by most students without any preliminary instruction.

18. Is there a parent's guide for the *Theology of the Body for Teens*?

Yes. The *Parent's Guide* serves as an excellent and informative overview of the *Theology of the Body for Teens* curriculum. While it has been specifically written for parents of teens participating in the program, it can be used by any parent wishing to learn more about the *Theology of the Body* and pass it onto their teens. It includes summaries of each of the 12 chapters contained in the Student Workbook; a basic intro to the *Theology of the Body*; study questions for parents to discuss with their teens; and family applications to help create and foster a *Theology of the Body* culture in the home. There is also a Parent Overview segment included in the *Theology of the Body for Teens* DVD series.

19. Does Ascension Press have a *Theology of the Body* curriculum for pre-teens or even younger children?

We are in the early stages of developing *Theology of the Body* material for parents of pre-teens and younger children. Our focus in creating these materials is to keep the content in the realm of "foundational concepts" about the human person, human dignity, and God's overall plan for humanity. As we believe such discussions are best left to parents, who are the primary educators of their children and are in the best position to know when such subjects are appropriate to discuss, the content of the resource will be directed to parents who, in turn, will teach them to their children.

20. Should this curriculum be presented to co-ed classes or do you suggest separating classes or youth groups into separate male/female groupings?

The authors agree that there are benefits to segregating guys and girls into single-sex groups when studying this material and would encourage such a separation, if possible. The willingness of teens to explore sensitive topics involving sexuality and chastity usually corresponds to their comfort level with others in the room.

We realize, though, that splitting up a class into same gender groups is not always possible. Knowing this, the authors have adapted Pope John Paul II's original material in a way that is certainly suitable for use in coeducational settings. There can even be a benefit at times to having the teens hear both male and female perspectives on the material, as there are ample discussion questions in the curriculum. Teachers and youth ministers must take care to control the discussion, however, and keep immature behavior to a minimum.

21. What is the length of each lesson?

Each chapter in *Theology of the Body for Teens* can be presented in a variety of time formats. The length of the lesson will depend upon the time you spend in discussion, activities, outside reading, and the needs of the class. Ascension Press has produced a free *Guide to the Leader's Guide*, which provides four different schema for 60, 75, 90, and 120-minute class scenarios. This resource is available for free at www.TOBFforTeens.com.

22. Is there a DVD series for *Theology of the Body for Teens*?

Yes. In this series each of the twelve lessons is covered in a twenty-minute presentation and contains instruction and commentary by Brian Butler and Jason & Crystalina Evert. In these twelve segments, dynamic content is used, including practical applications, graphics, real-life interviews and animated trivia in order to provide a relevant, educational, and enjoyable experience for teens. There are separate guys and girls segments designed to help foster an in-depth discussion of the material. It also contains a forty-minute presentation and summary of the *Theology of the Body for Teens* program geared specifically toward parents.

23. What products do I need to teach *Theology of the Body for Teens*?

Each teacher or presenter should have a *Theology of the Body for Teens* Leader's Guide and a set of the DVDs. Each student needs a *Theology of the Body for Teens* Student Workbook. It is also highly recommended that a copy of the *Parent's Guide* booklet be given to the parent's of participating teens (See question 18). Books that can enhance the studies of your teens are Christopher West's *Theology of the Body for Beginners* and Jason Evert's *If You Really Love Me*.

24. Is the content difficult to teach?

Although the content of the program is very rich, it is presented in a manner so that most high school religion teachers and youth ministers can understand and teach it without much difficulty. The Leader's Guide provides helpful teaching tips and discussion questions for each topic, and the DVD series provides an invaluable overview and introduction to each of the twelve chapters to further facilitate the learning experience.

25. Does *Theology of the Body for Teens* have the Imprimatur? Is it approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)?

Both the Leader's Guide and Student Workbook have been granted the *Imprimatur* by Justin Cardinal Rigali, Archbishop of Philadelphia.

The USCCB's Ad Hoc Committee for Conformity of Catechetical Materials with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has reviewed *Theology of the Body for Teens* and determined that, because it is a supplemental program, *Theology of the Body for Teens* neither requires nor can it receive a formal review from the Committee.

To ensure fidelity to the teachings of John Paul II, the program has been carefully reviewed by theologians and experts in the Theology of the Body, including Dr. Mary Healy, Mary Beth Bonacci, M.A., Christopher West, M.T.S., Fr. Walter Schu, LC, Ph.D, and Katrina Zeno, M.A.

26. Who are the authors of *Theology of the Body for Teens* and what are their credentials?

The three primary authors of the program—Brian Butler, Jason Evert, and Crystalina Evert—are recognized leaders in education, youth ministry, and chastity education. Additional content was contributed by renowned youth leader, Mark Hart. Here is some biographical information on each:

Brian Butler served as the associate director for youth catechesis in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, has taught and coordinated campus ministry at the high school level for five years, and has more than twelve years of experience in youth ministry. Brian is the co-founder of Dumb Ox Productions Inc, a nonprofit organization that offers retreats, speakers, and resources focusing on chastity and vocation formation for teenagers, and he currently coordinates a comprehensive vocation formation program for the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux in Louisiana. He is the co-author of *The Bible Thumper* (vols. 1 & 2), holds a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of New Orleans, and is in the process of completing a master's degree in theology at Notre Dame Seminary School of Theology. Brian enjoys music, sports, and spending time with his wonderful wife, Lisa, and their three children.

Jason Evert speaks to more than 100,000 students each year as an apologist and chastity speaker for Catholic Answers. He is the author of six books, including *If You Really Loved Me* and *Pure Love*, which challenge young people to embrace the virtue of chastity. As the founder of Catholic Answer's Pure Love Club, he is internationally-recognized as a leading chastity speaker and teacher. Jason earned a master's degree in theology, and undergraduate degrees in counseling and theology, with a minor in philosophy from the Franciscan University of Steubenville. He and his wife, Crystalina, are the parents of two young boys.

Crystalina Evert has shared her inspirational testimony to hundreds of thousands of teens around the world as a member of the Catholic Answers Speakers' Bureau. She is the author of the book *Pure Womanhood* and is a frequent guest on radio programs throughout the country. Together, she and Jason host the EWTN series, *The Pure Life*. Their other television appearances include Fox News, *Donahue*, WGN, and the BBC. They also serve on the board of directors for the National Abstinence Clearinghouse, and were presented with the 2003 Impact Award by the National Abstinence Clearinghouse in recognition of their success with teens in America.

27. Can a teacher or youth minister use portions of the program or do all twelve lessons have to be used at once?

The Theology of the Body is an extensive and cohesive body of work, yet it contains many concepts that can be understood individually. As with any curriculum, the concepts of *Theology of the Body for Teens* will be best understood if they are presented as a whole. This said, we believe each individual chapter, as well as concepts within a given chapter, can be taught individually.

28. How much do the *Theology of the Body for Teens* materials cost?

The retail price of the Leader's Guide is \$29.95, the Student Workbook is \$14.95, the DVD series is \$99.95, and the Parent's Guide is \$6.95. Bulk discounts to educators and parishes are available. Prior to placing an order, please call Ascension Press' sales department at 1-800-376-0520 for more information.

29. Does the curriculum follow the John Paul II's same six-cycle schema?

Yes and no. The program features all six of the cycles in the Pope's original schema, but we have taken into account the unique needs of teenagers and, therefore, it intentionally deviated from the original order of catechesis. The content, however, is not changed or altered; rather, it is merely presented in a manner that will best facilitate a teenager's desire to learn the material, as well as making it easily understandable to them.

30. Can this material be used in a retreat format?

Yes. Using the Leader's Guide, Student Workbook and DVD set, the *Theology of the Body for Teens* authors have developed an easy to follow weekend *Retreat Guide* that is currently available as a free download. Visit www.TOBFforTeens.com

31. Can *Theology of the Body for Teens* replace a high school sexual morality or chastity program?

Absolutely. This program speaks to the heart of what sexual morality and chastity programs are based upon. The *Theology of the Body* brings a greater understanding of love, relationships, and the basic meaning of life, so that one is able to appreciate the sexual virtue of chastity, and therefore live it in a more profound and meaningful way.

32. Can it be used in a vocations course?

This curriculum is an excellent supplement for a vocations course because it addresses both marriage and the celibate life and questions related to finding one's vocation.

33. Does one need to be trained to teach this curriculum?

Although the content was written in an intuitive manner, and most educated theology teachers and youth ministers will be able to understand and pass it on, receiving training in this curriculum will be beneficial for every presenter. Teachers and authors of the program offer full-day Trainings for religious educators. Information Sessions are also available for those organizations who have scheduled a full-day Training. Visit www.TOBFforTeens.com for more details about these Trainings and Information Sessions.

Beyond the Training Sessions, the *Theology of the Body for Teens* DVD series provides excellent instruction and commentary from Brian Butler and Jason & Crystalina Evert on every chapter of the program. The DVD series is an excellent tool for any educator who wants to become more familiar with *Theology of the Body for Teens*. Furthermore, the Parents' Information segment of the DVD series provides a great introduction to the program for parents who want to know more about it as well.

Your teens will undoubtedly have many questions about the material, as it will engage and inform them. You will want to be as prepared as possible to give them the answers to these questions that they desperately seek. There are many difficult questions and issues that arise when discussing human sexuality. While training is not essential, it is a great asset and resource when preparing to teach this material.

34. If I am already familiar with the *Theology of the Body*, why should I be trained?

If you already have a solid grasp of the *Theology of the Body*, you should be able to use this material without training. The curriculum was designed for ease-of-use but attending a training session can be of significant benefit to any teacher. Like most of Catholic theology, the *Theology of the Body* is rich in meaning; its depths are virtually inexhaustible. In addition, because the curriculum involves much more than just theological content, learning about the experience of those who have used it will be valuable to teachers.

35. What is involved in the full-day Training?

Our Training is typically conducted in an intensive, full-day seminar. During this time, the facilitator will guide attendees through three or four sessions while providing a basic catechesis in the Theology of the Body. An understanding of the pedagogy of the program and how it can best be implemented in various religious education settings will also be considered. A interactive and comprehensive question-and-answer session, during which the most common questions teenagers have about issues of sexuality will be discussed, is included in the training session.

36. Who should attend the training?

Whoever wants to get a better grasp of how to most effectively use this material with teenagers (e.g., teachers, priests, parents, youth ministers, directors of religious education, etc.).

37. What is involved in an Information Session?

Teachers of the program are available to offer a one to two hour Information Session in which an overview of the program is given to interested persons in a given diocese, including youth ministers, teachers, administrators, and more.

38. Have some dioceses already adopted this?

Yes. Though *Theology of the Body for Teens* has been implemented in many diocesan schools and parish religious education programs. Several diocesan Information Nights and Trainings have also been conducted around the country. Visit www.TOBforTeens.com to view a list of these upcoming Trainings.

39. Can this be used for college-level audiences?

This curriculum would be a great supplement for an early college level course on Catholic sexuality or for use in a Newman Center or campus faith-formation setting.

40. How can I integrate *Theology of the Body for Teens* in my high school theology curriculum?

The Theology of the Body for Teens material can easily be used as a supplement for courses in morality, basic Church teachings (the Creed), or Christian vocations. It could also be incorporated into a Sacred Scripture course, as the tenets of the Theology of the Body are rooted in the creation stories of Genesis and in the words of Christ in the New Testament. This material could also be used as a stand alone catechesis on Catholic sexuality, chastity, or as an elongated treatment on virtue, in whatever course the catechist deems it appropriate. Also, this curriculum could be used as a supplement for a sacraments course since there is treatment of marriage and holy orders, a brief commentary on baptism, and heavy encouragement to receive reconciliation in Chapter 4, in which we discuss hope and redemption.

41. How can I integrate this with my youth group?

Each lesson has options for using icebreakers and prayer experiences that help youth ministers incorporate this material into a “series” on the Theology of the Body. Youth ministers could easily do an icebreaker, give a short talk (or play the corresponding DVD chapter segment), dive into small group discussion about the material, and then use song or movie clip suggestions from the Leader’s Guide to round out a great series of youth group meetings on the subject. Visit www.TOBforTeens.com for the free download *Guide to the Leader’s Guide* for easy to follow steps and suggestions for each chapter with four different meeting time options.

42. Is the Leader's Guide needed to teach the class?

Even if you are already an expert in the Theology of the Body, we highly recommend you use the Leader's Guide. It is filled with demonstrations, explanations, song and movie clip suggestions to accompany the teaching, and helpful hints for applying this material to the lives of teenagers. The Leader's Guide is a fantastic resource that both experienced teachers and "rookie" catechists will find helpful in teaching the Theology of the Body for Teens.

43. How much preparation is needed for a teacher to teach this?

This depends on how familiar the teacher is with the Theology of the Body, and how thorough one wants to explore the issues in the text. We recommend that the teacher who is not familiar with the Theology of the Body invest some time reading an introduction to the subject such as Christopher West's *Theology of the Body for Beginners*. It is also recommended that teachers attend the training. A teacher with a strong theological background, though, will be able to understand how to present the materials after reviewing each lesson and determining which of the segments he or she wishes to use in a particular class session.

With all of this in mind, it will take the typical educator two hours to teach this material for the first time. The free *Guide to the Guide* available at www.TOBforTeens.com can also assist in preparing to teach this program.

44. Should this program precede or follow confirmation?

Because the confirmation age differs in many dioceses, we recommend that this material be taught based on age rather than on the reception of the sacrament of confirmation. As mentioned earlier, we recommend this program be taught to teenagers between the ages of thirteen and nineteen.

45. What is the typical outcome for the students?

Students exposed to the beauty of the Theology of the Body have a deeper appreciation for the meaning of human sexuality as it relates to God's plan of salvation. Because of this, students are more likely to value human dignity, chastity, and other virtues associated with their sexuality. Most importantly, students will grow in their faith and love for God and his Church.

46. What other resources are available for Theology of the Body for Teens?

In addition to the Leader's Guide, Student Workbook, Parent's Guide and DVD set, some free support resources are available at www.TOBforTeens.com, including the *Guide to the Leader's Guide*, a *Retreat Guide*, *Parent Information Session Guide*, the DVD series overview with sample clips, chapter overviews, sample chapter from the workbook, and more.

**For more information, visit
www.TOBforTeens.com or
call 1-800-376-0520**

THEOLOGY
OF THE
BODY
for Teens