

How has the "Theology of the Body" impacted the way I see myself as a young man/ young woman in today's culture?

Living a Godly life in today's culture can be a very challenging task. Sometimes it can be difficult to rise above the norms of society and choose a higher standard, a standard that God has called each and every one of His sons and daughters to live by. In order for this standard to be lived out in life, one must think of him or herself as a child of God, a God who died for all sins and wants a personal relationship with every human being He has ever made. Theology of the Body has helped me to see myself as one of these children. I know that I am loved and that I can give my life to a greater purpose, a purpose bigger than myself. I have been called to a higher standard, and I now try to live every day to achieve that standard while raising the bar for myself as a young man in Christ. However, there was a time in my life where I was unsure of where my life was headed. I was in a hole that was difficult to get out of because my body was telling me things that made me uneasy and caused me to question my purpose. This problem stemmed from an evil that has plagued our culture and led far too many young men to stumble and fall in their lives and especially their faith. I am speaking of pornography.

Pornography controlled my life from seventh grade up until the end of my junior year in high school. It made me scared, frustrated, and even dishonest with myself. I never truly knew who I was because of the darkness pornography put deep inside of my being. I did not see myself as a child of God then. I had faith, and I loved God, but I felt apart and unworthy to be associated with Him. I tried to cover my addiction up but it was always there gnawing at me, getting me to slip and fall. It was hard to look at myself in a positive light during that time, but I made excuses that hurt me because they made me complacent in my struggle. I knew other guys were going through the same things as I was, and for the most part they had no regrets so why should I be worried? But as my faith began to grow through organizations like YoungLife (a non-denominational Christian organization) and my church community, I became increasingly displeased with my sinful ways until I hated what was going on in my life, so I decided that change was necessary in order for me to have the life I wanted for myself.

My sophomore year in high school, a friend I had met through YoungLife and whom I had told about my struggles with pornography through an accountability partnership that we decided to take part in with each other, invited me to a seminar at a local bar on Theology of the Body. I had heard about Theology of the Body from my parents and knew some of the general ideas behind its teachings, so I was interested to see what it was all about. At this point in my life I had fully decided that pornography was unacceptable, and I was in the process of taking steps to dealing with this issue but I was still having just as many failures as I had successes. I did not know what to expect from the seminar but I was really hoping that I would learn something new that would help me with my problem. I was very pleased and excited when my friend and I walked to the car that night. I had heard so many encouraging things that I had not thought about before! After that night I thought about how my body was meant to have the urges that I dealt with and that living with them did not have to be a burden. My body had been telling me things that I was uncomfortable with and, in some cases, things that I didn't understand. But Theology of the Body told me that those things were a blessing, and what I had to look forward to in married life is one of the most incredible things God has given us. However, those things (as I already knew) must be cherished and saved for the woman that would be my future wife. Every time I had looked at another woman lustfully, I had stolen from my future wife and had even gone as far as cheating on her! I did not want that at all, but I knew that things would not be a walk in the park just because of my newfound knowledge. I now had a better understanding of my body and I needed to respect it so that I could in turn prepare myself for my future wife and learn to respect women in general and see them for the true creation and children of God that they are.

I think one of the most important things Theology of the Body helped me to understand was that I was not the only person who had these things going on within themselves. I knew prior that pornography was a major problem with teenage boys but I never thought about it in the light that pornography confused the body of its true purpose. I now knew that the body was meant to feel those things, but they were meant to be saved for the beautiful union of two married people. It was such a relieving thing to know that I was meant to share in such a powerful love that God had given to me. I was not dirty, but I had been

contaminated. I could love myself better because I knew now that I was made to have sex and that sex was a wonderful, beautiful thing. This knowledge made it easier for me to open up to others with my issues and to not live in fear of myself. I later would allow my parents to sign me up in a Christian counseling service to further my progress and knowledge about my addiction. I recently stood in front of a few hundred YoungLife benefactors and parents and talked about my struggles with pornography. For the first time in my life I told that whole room of people that pornography no longer had its hold over me. There are so many factors in my life that helped me to get through my addiction, and a new outlook on myself through the teachings of Theology of the Body was definitely a turning point in my life. Since going to that seminar I have read into the “Theology of the Body For Teens” and it has kept me excited and passionate about how I can share in God's love and save myself for the woman I will one day marry. Also, a daily dose of scripture reading and quiet times with God have kept me focused and excited for my life in Christ. I am a child of God, His own creation, and knowing that is the most encouraging and supporting thing that I will ever know.