

THEOLOGY
OF THE BODY

for Teens

DISCOVERING GOD'S
PLAN FOR LOVE AND LIFE



STUDENT WORKBOOK

Chapter One

Created for Love

Have you ever wondered why the subject of sex is part of nearly every TV show, advertisement, song, and movie? And the sex shown or sung about is usually glorious—with no pain inflicted on those involved.

Rarely do we see the pain that comes, for example, from selfishness. Did you ever think about what society would be like without selfishness in relationships? If everyone simply loved the other as he or she wished to be loved, we would have virtually no pain, no problems in relationships. Imagine, for example, if marriages never ended in divorce. Think about the pain that both parents and kids would be spared.

Confusion reigns, and it is leading to some seriously broken hearts. People today seem more confused about the meaning of love and the purpose of sex than perhaps ever before. Many people are searching for the meaning of life and love but don't realize that the answer is actually right in front of us; the key to finding that love we're all looking for (even if we don't know it) is hidden in God's original design of our bodies and souls. Yes, you read that correctly. This Catholic curriculum is stating that God has actually hidden in our design as "male and female" a key to the secret of love.



OPENING PRAYER

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

(Option #1)

Leader or Reader #1: Read Genesis 1:1-2, 25-28a, 30b, 31a

“In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters.

God made all kinds of wild animals, all kinds of cattle, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. God saw how good it was. Then God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.’ God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: ‘Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it, and so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.’”

Leader or Reader #2: Lord, as You created us in Your image and likeness, we know that You created us out of love and for love. You created us for a union of love with each other just as You created us to be together forever with You. Lord, help us to be open today to learn, to live, and to love like You. We ask all this as we pray together: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Saint (patron saint of your church or school), pray for us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

(Option #2)

Leader or Reader #1: Read John 10:10, 15:11

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly... These things I have spoken to you that my joy might be in you and your joy may be full.”

Leader or Reader #2: Jesus, You have created us for love. You made us for Yourself, and our hearts will not be at rest until they rest in You. So, open our minds and our hearts, so that this hour of study may be an hour of prayer. Help us to let go of those things that keep us from receiving the joy You wish to give us today and always. **Amen.**

notes



STORY STARTER: Words and Wounds of the Heart

- “I gave in to him because I thought it would make him like me more. But the next day, he acted like he hardly knew me.”
- “My parents got divorced when I was four, so I never really had a dad. Now my mom is with this other guy, but he gets drunk all the time and they fight a lot.”



BRIDGING THE GAP

So why is there so much pain and suffering in the world today? It all started with one simple choice: when Adam and Eve chose to go with their own plan instead of God's plan. Their **original sin**, which you will learn more about in the coming chapters, affects us all. Instead of wanting to do what's right, we often desire to do the wrong thing. This tendency to sin is called **concupiscence**.

Concupiscence is not something that affects only a select group of people; it affects every single one of us as members of a society that is damaged and hurting from the effects of sin. Just look at all the broken families, broken hearts, sexual abuse, addictions, infidelity, and shame and regret in people's lives. This is what **despair** looks like in a society that thought it found **sexual liberation** and freedom by using sexuality in whatever way it wanted. Consider how all this has brought us to where we are today.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the mass media grew stronger and stronger in their influence on society. You could say they became a primary teacher of young and old alike. Television and movies degenerated quickly from mere sexual suggestion to more sexually-explicit material. As some observers have noted, we are experiencing the "frog in the pot" scenario. You may be familiar with this example. If you take a frog and put it into a pot of boiling water, it will immediately jump out. However, if you place the frog in room-temperature water and then slowly heat the water, the frog will continue to adjust to the rising temperature and not know that it is in danger. It will stay in the ever-increasingly hot water until it finally dies. This describes very well the moral swamp displayed in our modern media. We have gradually become desensitized to the increase of explicit sexual content in our media. The result of all this is that our country is plagued by a seriously warped understanding of marriage and the role that sex should play in relationships.

Lust is "disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure" (CCC 2351). It is sexual desire apart from God's love that selfishly seeks one's own pleasure at the expense of another. Lust often dominates our culture. This domination can easily lead to apathy, or lack of concern, on the part of many. Apathy then leads to a lack of motivation to change. We begin to settle for less than true, good, and beautiful relationships. These are heavy words, we know. They almost sound dismal. A natural question one would ask is, "Is there any hope?" Are we all doomed to suffer broken hearts and marry people who will commit to us only as long as it is convenient? Where is God in all this mess?

God is with us, and there is hope! The good news is that life and sexuality were not always the way we find it now. Jesus tells us, "In the beginning, it was not so" (Mt 19:8). In fact, in the beginning, love had its way and lust *didn't even exist*. To learn more about how to solve the problem of lust and sexual confusion, we must go back to the beginning to see how God created sexuality. In doing



Did you know?

One in three girls is sexually abused by the time she's eighteen years old.ⁱⁱ



Did you know?

About 40 percent of all children in the United States will live with their single mother (never-married or divorced) and her boyfriend at some point before their 16th birthday.ⁱⁱⁱ



Did you know?

Every day, 8,000 teenagers in the United States become infected with a sexually transmitted disease.^{iv}

so, we will discover the true purpose of our sexual gifts. We will see what went wrong and find the hope that will lead us back to true love and happiness.



TO THE CORE

Pope John Paul II (1920–2005) dedicated 129 of his “Wednesday audiences” during the first six years of his papacy (1979 to 1984) to a series of talks about the human body and sexuality. These addresses were later compiled into book form, creating the first major teaching of John Paul II. This teaching is called the **Theology of the Body**, and an international surge of interest has followed its proclamation.

The Theology of the Body explores the meaning of our bodies and of sexual desire as it relates to the purpose of our existence. Philosophers have asked questions about the meaning of life for thousands of years. If you’ve ever wondered, “Who am I? What is my purpose in life? What is love all about?”, you are asking very good questions. Answering these questions was a major goal of John Paul II through his teaching of the Theology of the Body. After all, he was not just a great pope but also a great philosopher.

So, what is **theology**? Theology may be understood as the study of God. St. Anselm, an eleventh-century philosopher, theologian, and archbishop, called it “faith seeking understanding.” The word theology can be broken down like this: In Greek *theos* means “God” and *logos* means “word.” Logos was also defined by the ancient Greeks in other ways that relate to “science” and “study.” (Notice that our modern words which have “-ology” at the end of them refer to some type of study: biology, archaeology, radiology, psychology, etc.) So, the Theology of the Body is the study of God as revealed through our bodies.¹

By looking at the creation of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis, we begin to find the answers to our questions about the purpose of life.

Love Equals Communion

In Genesis 1:26-31 we learn that when God made man and woman it was “very good.” They were made in his “image and likeness.” We may hear that phrase often but let’s consider what it means: The Bible says “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). Now, when love is present, it is never in isolation. This is why a person can’t marry himself. Rather, whenever you have love, you must have a lover, a beloved, and the love between them. There must be a communion of persons, united in love. A communion of persons is created when two or more persons give themselves to one another in love. So, in the case of God, you have the Father, the Son, and the fire of love between them, which is the Holy Spirit.²

As a “communion of persons,” God created humans to participate in heaven and on earth in God’s love. This means that God created us male and female



*“Then God said:
‘Let us make man in our image,
after our likeness.
Let them have
dominion over
the fish of the sea,
the birds of the air, and the
cattle, and over all the wild
animals and all the creatures
that crawl on the ground.’*

*God created man
in his image;
in the divine image
he created him; male and
female he created them.”
– Gn 1:26-27*

precisely so that we could image His love by becoming a sincere gift to each other.³ Giving this sincere gift to one another creates a communion of persons, through which we share God's love with each other.



COMPREHENSION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is *theology*?
2. What was the goal of John Paul II in his teaching of the Theology of the Body?
3. What do you think our society believes and teaches us about the meaning of our bodies?
4. Where in Scripture does it say that our bodies are very good?
5. Why do you think some people believe our bodies are bad?
6. How is a *communion of persons* formed?



The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that "God himself is an eternal exchange of love...and He has destined us to share in that exchange" (CCC 221).

Not Meant to Be Alone

When God said that Adam and Eve were made in His image and likeness, one thing this meant was that they were designed for love. But when Adam was created, he was without Eve. But even before Eve was created, Adam knew something was missing. As a result, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gn 1:18).

Since we're made in God's image and likeness, the Church teaches that, "Man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere gift of self."⁴ In order to give to someone else, one must not be alone. *Someone else* is there for communion. This total gift of self can be seen in the married life or in the **celibate life**, which is *choosing* to forego earthly marriage so as to devote oneself entirely to the marriage of Christ and the Church. In both cases, marriage and **celibacy**, we are called to make ourselves living sacrifices. In the words of Blessed Mother Teresa, "Life is not worth living unless it is lived for others."

John Paul II's vision of the body is a key to understanding the meaning of our lives. This short quote summarizes his view of the body as a visible sign that points to things that are invisible:

The body, in fact, and it alone is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery [of God]... and thus to be a sign of it.⁵

Although we cannot see God, our bodies reveal many amazing truths about Him, because we are made in His "image and likeness." For example, just as a

It is Jesus who first calls to us, saying “know thyself.” He challenges us to learn the truth of our existence and to direct our lives toward the purpose of the loving communion for which we have been created. He knows that our fulfillment cannot be found in lies but in truth. God, who is a perfect communion in the blessed Trinity, created us to be in communion with Him. This relationship with God “is defined by that unique fact that the more deeply I abandon myself to Him, the more completely I let Him penetrate my being, the more powerfully He, the Creator, gains authority in me, the more *I become myself*.”¹¹

So, the great command to be given is to *become who you are*. In the movie trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, this call is given directly to Aragorn in the *The Return of the King*. Aragorn is the heir to the throne of his kingdom, but he has not accepted responsibility for it yet. When in the midst of the greatest challenge facing Middle Earth, Lord Elrond has re-forged the sword of the king, he presents it to Aragorn with the words, “Put aside the ‘ranger.’ *Become who you were born to be!*” Just like Aragorn, if we set aside the lies that we have believed about ourselves and embrace the reality of our life in Christ, we can claim and proclaim with boldness the truth of who we really are.

Read these inspiring words of John Paul II and see if they speak to you, even as a faint echo in your heart:

It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness; He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; He is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is He who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is He who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle.

It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.

– Pope John Paul II, *World Youth Day, Rome 2000*

You Decide

In whose vision of life do you think true happiness is found?

Weezer, from the song “Tired of Sex”

“I’m tired, so tired. I’m tired of having sex. So tired. I’m spread so thin. I don’t know who I am. Monday night I’m makin’ Jen. Tuesday night I’m makin’ Lyn. Wednesday night I’m makin’ Catherine. Oh, why can’t I be makin’ Love come true?”

vs.

Pope John Paul II

“The person who does not decide to love forever will find it very difficult to really love for even one day.”



Understanding the propulsion system on a space shuttle...

Having a working knowledge of the new tax laws governing foreign trade...

Knowing how to properly care for a beached whale...

These are not situations that the average person really needs to know much about. To be ignorant of any one of these facts—or millions of others like them—does not render one stupid or lazy. That being said...

Knowing how to shut off the water to an overflowing toilet...

Knowing how to perform the Heimlich maneuver on a person who is choking...

Knowing how to ask for the nearest clean restroom in a foreign country...

These are all situations in which a little bit of knowledge can go a long way. To be ignorant in one of these moments could be disastrous—or at least messy.

Sure, if you *wanted* to learn about the physics of a shuttle launch, or the ramifications of changes in tax laws, or how to take care of a whale, you're usually just one book, one click, or one seminar away. Again, these issues might be interesting, but they really are not necessary to the average person's everyday happiness. You can choose to remain ignorant when it comes to several areas of life and your world will just keep on spinning.

But remaining ignorant on "the purpose of your life" is an entirely different matter. Knowing your purpose in life and living it out will determine your future on earth as well as your eternity after death. That's an amazing concept worthy of your attention.

As you study this curriculum, you will have a choice each day of whether to be open-minded as you read. You'll also have the choice of whether to be open to change in your life. If you have an open heart, you will grow in wisdom and knowledge before God and man. The truth you find in these pages will bring challenges, but also great satisfaction. And remember that God will never offer you a challenge without also offering you every grace needed to overcome it.

In short, if you take what you learn in this workbook and apply it, in a practical way, your life is going to change ... for the better. This is a crash course in love, in truth,

and in authentic freedom. In these "live it out" sections, you will be offered encouragement and practical ideas of things you can do with your body that will have an everlasting impact on your soul. That will help the "head knowledge" you gain on these pages become "heart knowledge" you retain for life.

So, what is the goal of your life? What is it supposed to be? The answer is actually quite simple—it's living it that is the challenge. The answer is "to love." God calls us to this. This is what Christ lived. This is what the Holy Spirit makes possible. This is what the saints achieved.

But only after you have accepted the love of God can you share that love with others, freely and purely. So, here's your chance—your "Love 101" course starts today. Learn how to receive the love of God, and to allow that love to transform your life into something beautiful. (And guys, this is absolutely for you, too. Love is an extremely masculine thing. If you're looking for the ultimate challenge, try laying down your life—in big and small ways—for another. And then try doing it day in and day out. You'll find if you get married, for example, that the test of a real man involves "dying to yourself" every day. We'll say more about this later.)

If you ask, "Why am I here?", know that God created you to love and to be loved. As Christ said, "Love one another, even as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34). Want to know God's expectations for you? Consider Micah 6:8: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

God loves you more than you love yourself. Doubt it? Read John 15:13: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The verses listed above are to be prayed through...that's how you will start to *live it out* in a real, practical way.

Here's one final idea before we move forward: next time you see a crucifix, consider the fact that you have a God who loves you so much that He would rather die than spend eternity without you.



PRAYER & JOURNAL ACTIVITY

Read: Quietly and slowly read the following meditation.

Everyone longs to give himself or herself completely to someone, to have a deep and committed soul relationship with another. We want to be loved thoroughly and unconditionally. But God says:

Wait until you are satisfied, fulfilled, and content with being loved by Me alone, with giving yourself totally, unreservedly to Me alone.

I love you, my child. But until you discover that only in Me is your satisfaction to be found, you will not be capable of the perfect human relationship that I have planned for you. You will never be united with another as you desire to be until you are united with Me, exclusive of anyone or anything else, exclusive of any other desires and belongings.

I want you to stop planning and stop wishing, and allow Me to give you the most thrilling plan that exists—one that you can't imagine. I want you to have the very best. Please allow Me to bring it to you.

*Just keep your eyes on Me, expecting the greatest things.
Keep experiencing that satisfaction knowing that I AM.
Keep learning and listening to the things I tell you.
You must be patient.*

*Don't be anxious.
Don't worry.
Don't look around at the things others have.
Don't look at the things you think you want.
Just keep looking to Me, or you will miss what I want to give you.*

And then, when you are ready, I will surprise you with a love far more wonderful than you could ever dream. You see, until you are ready, and until the one I have for you is ready ... until you are both satisfied exclusively with Me and the life I have prepared for you, you won't be able to experience the love that exemplifies your relationship with Me ... and this is perfect love.

(Anonymous Prayer)

Pray: Take a few minutes to reflect silently on what God is saying to you in your heart.

Respond: Use your journal to respond to this amazing love that God has for you. If it helps you, read through the meditation again (written from God's point of view) and respond to each of the sections.



"Chastity is a difficult, long-term matter; one must wait patiently for it to bear fruit, for the happiness of loving kindness which it must bring. But at the same time, chastity is the sure way to happiness."

— Pope John Paul II



WORK IT OUT

Assignment #1: Draw a picture, write a poem, or write a song that creatively helps others realize why men and women do not make sense without the other—the two were made for union with each other. What would the world be like if there were no women? What if there were no men? Creatively include the text of Genesis 2:24 at some point in your creation. By the simple realization of our need for each other, we can also recognize that we were made for communion with each other.

Assignment #2: Use the terms from the glossary at the end of the chapter and go online to create your own crossword puzzle or word search that other students could use to help them better learn the many definitions in this chapter.

Assignment #3: Dig into the primary text of Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body from November 14, 1979, which focuses on man imaging God through the communion of persons. Write a summary essay of the address.



Project #1: Create your own “man on the street” video. Go to your cafeteria or a school sporting event to ask the following question: What is the meaning of life? After taping ten responses from people in different age groups, get on camera yourself and give a verbal summary of what you heard. Then give your own one minute answer to the same question.



CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Leader or Reader #1: **O Blessed Virgin and Mother Mary**, please pray with me that I, like you, can live a life of perfect love. Help me to live a life worthy of returning to the One Who created me in love and for love. Please pray that I, like you, will live as a sinless and perfect vessel of the Holy Spirit.

Leader or Reader #2: Let us pray together: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Saint (patron saint of your church or school), pray for us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Glossary

of Key Terms

Celibacy (celibate life): Freely choosing to forego earthly marriage “for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19:12), that is, for the sake of the heavenly marriage of Christ and the Church. Celibate people “consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to ‘the affairs of the Lord’” (CCC 1579, 1 Cor 7:32).

Communion of persons: The “common union” between two or more persons who give themselves to one another in love; they see in each other the image and likeness of God and want the best for the other. John Paul II refers to the unity of Adam and Eve as the “prototype” for the communion of persons, through which man and woman become more fully the image of God.

Concupiscence: The “inclination to sin” that is present in all humans, inherited through the sin of Adam and Eve, and against which we must struggle to resist “by the grace of Jesus Christ” (CCC 1264). While it inclines us to sin and comes from sin, concupiscence itself is not a sin.

Despair: The opposite of hope, despair is the resolve to give up pursuing whatever was initially pursued. In the case of relationships in our culture, many people despair, thinking that the possibility of finding loving, faithful relationships is impossible. But with God there is always hope, and in Him we find the keys to building loving, life-giving relationships that last.

Dignity: The inherent and unchanging value of all persons as a direct result of their being created by God in His image and likeness.

Love: A decision to “will the good of another” person (St. Thomas Aquinas, as quoted in CCC 1766). John Paul II echoes this same definition in much of his writing on love, and adds that love involves a sincere gift of oneself to others.

Lust: It is “disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure” (CCC 2351). It is sexual desire apart from God’s love—a selfish desire that seeks one’s own pleasure at the expense of another.

Original sin: The first sin of mankind against God, when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God’s command and do what they wanted instead. This choice affected all of humanity, giving us all a tendency to sin, a disordered desire to break God’s law, and a world prone to suffering and struggles of all kinds—including death.

Sacrament: A sacrament makes a spiritual reality visible to us. It is an outward sign “instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church by which divine life [grace] is dispensed to us” (CCC 1131).

Sacramentality of the body: The inherent ability of the body to act as a visible sign of God’s invisible love.

Sexual liberation: The common term for escaping sexual “rules” so as to do whatever one wants with his or her sexuality. In reality, this liberation is not sexual freedom but an excuse to use sexuality as a form of recreation, often leading to the slavery of sexual addiction and a life of emptiness and broken relationships.

Theology: The study of God, or “faith seeking understanding” (St. Anselm). The word comes from the Greek words *Theos* (God) and *logos* (word). Theology is its own science of faithful study, seeking to understand God and His word.

Theology of the Body: A study of God and the purpose of our existence, as discovered and revealed through our bodies.