

Introduction

If you are preparing to lead a group of students through the *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* program, it is recommended that you conduct a **Parent Information Session**. The purpose is for you to:

- Educate the parents about Blessed Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body.
- Introduce them to the program their sons and daughters will be studying.
- Encourage them to take seriously their role as primary educators in matters of faith and morals.
- Empower them to talk with their children about the true meaning of their sexuality.

The purpose of this **Guide** is to assist you in conducting a **Parent Information Session**. In this guide you will find:

- A checklist of things to consider prior, during and after the Parent Session.
- Tips for helping parents create a culture of Theology of the Body in their homes.
- Resources for further study.
- Sample letters for the parents.

Ideally, the same instructor(s) who will be teaching the *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* program would also facilitate (or at least be introduced at) the **Parent Information Session**. This will provide optimum continuity between the parents and their children.

Preparing for the Parent Information Session

1. Conduct the Parent Information Session prior to teaching the program.
2. Use the sample parent letter found at the end of this document to announce your meeting.
3. Allow approximately ninety minutes for the session.
4. Consider offering refreshments.
5. Take attendance. Follow up with parents who do not attend. (More information on this topic is provided later in this guide.)
6. Prepare to show the "Parent Overview," which is the last track on Disc #3 of the *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* DVD series. It is 33 minutes long.

The DVD can be played on either a laptop or by using a DVD player. You will need a suitable projector and screen or a television if a projector is not available.

7. Prepare to distribute the *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* Parent's Guide, one per family. It is recommended that the facilitator becomes conversant with the content of the Parent's Guide prior to the Information Session.

8. Familiarize yourself with the *Theology of the Body for Teens* Frequently Asked Questions document, as it contains commonly-asked questions about the program.
9. Consult *A Guide to Sensitive Topics*. Although written for your instruction with the youth, some parents may have similar theological comments and/or questions. This document is a wonderful resource, offering helpful advice and excellent answers to the theological and moral questions that may arise during your parent meeting. Both documents are available as free downloads at TOBforTeens.com.

During the Parent Information Session

1. As an introduction, explain that the purpose of the meeting is to learn about the exciting new *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* program.
2. Show the highlight DVD – available online or by calling 1-800-376-0520. This will give parents a quick overall look and feel of the program and get them excited about having their children participate.
3. Tell them that a Parent Information Session is offered as part of this curriculum for a number of reasons:
 - First of all, the Church recognizes and acknowledges that parents are the primary educators of their children in matters of faith and morals. Because of the sensitive content of the material, it is important for parents to understand the context in which sexuality is being presented. Again, parents are the first and primary educators of their children, especially in teaching the virtues of truth, faith, hope and love in their relationships with God and others. (See Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1632; Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 49; and the Pontifical Council for the Family document *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family*).
 - In this session we want to encourage parents to engage their children in meaningful conversation regarding the curriculum as it pertains to their lives. The Parent's Guide they will receive later in the session will greatly help with this communication.
 - Tell the parents that they will view a 33 minute DVD that features author Brian Butler explaining the curriculum and providing an overview of the entire program.
4. Show the 33 minute Parent Overview DVD. It is the last track on disc #3.
5. After the DVD, distribute copies of the Parent's Guide, one per family. Point out the format of the booklet and select a chapter to show how the curriculum content is summarized and that each chapter concludes with questions and family applications. Explain that these sections are meant to foster discussion of the material and strengthen family bonds.
6. Explain to the parents your overall plans, including the timing and format, for teaching the program to their middle schoolers. Mention that their sons and daughters will be told that their parents have attended an information meeting and have received the Parent's Guide. (Be sure to tell your students!)

Following the Parent Information Session:

1. For those parents who did not attend the Information Session, send them a copy of the Parent's Guide with a letter of explanation. Use the sample letter at the end of this document, or a modified version.
2. Some parents not attending the meeting may contact you with questions. You may want to offer them an opportunity to watch the "Parent's Overview" on DVD #3 at a mutually agreed upon time. We envision that they would view it alone while you are conducting other business thus not requiring you to view the overview multiple times. Offering to show the DVD to individual parents is optional.

Letter to Parents

The following two pages contain two sample letters you can customize and send to the parents of your middle schoolers.

The first one is to be used to invite parents to the *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* Parent Information Session.

The second one is to be used to send to parents who were unable to attend the Parent Information Session. If you mail this letter, be sure to include a Parent Guide.

It is recommended that you print on official letterhead of your school, parish, or organization and modify as needed.

Letter Inviting Parents to the Parent Info Session

[Date]

Dear Parents of [customize to fit your situation, e.g., "our middle school youth ministry," "our confirmation class," "our eight grade students," etc.]

We are introducing an exciting new program called *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition*. This curriculum is based on Blessed Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body, which offers a very positive message of the gift of sexuality as a good and essential part of love and life.

It is our hope that this curriculum will provide your child(ren) with the knowledge and understanding they need concerning the meaning and purpose of their identity, their sexuality and of their very existence.

Recognizing parents as the primary educators of their children in matters of faith and morals, this program includes a rich parental component. To review the contents of *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* and view an explanatory DVD from one of the authors, we invite you to attend a Parent Information Session on [add date/time] to be held at [location].

The meeting will not only inform you of the beautiful message we will be sharing with your child(ren), but offer you tools and encouragement to confidently discuss these critical issues with them.

At the Information Session, you will receive a *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* Parent's Guide. This excellent booklet summarizes the curriculum chapter by chapter, allowing you

to follow along at home as your child(ren) goes through the program. The booklet also provides helpful questions and family applications to foster meaningful conversation at home.

Thank you for your time and attention during this important stage of your child's spiritual development. We look forward to seeing you at the Parent Information Session. In the meantime, you can visit TOBforTeens.com for more information on the program.

Sincerely,

Letter to Parents Who Did Not Attend the Information Session

[Date]

Dear Parents of [customize to fit your situation, e.g., "our middle school youth ministry," "our confirmation class," "our eight grade students", etc.]

We are sorry you were unable to attend the Parent Information Session on [add date/time].

For your information and review, the enclosed Parent Guide will inform you of the new and beautiful program we are introducing to your child(ren) called *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition*.

This curriculum is based on Blessed Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body, which gives a very positive message of the gift of sexuality as a good and essential part of love and life. It is our hope that it will provide your child(ren) with the knowledge and understanding they need concerning the meaning and purpose of their identity, their sexuality and of their very existence.

Recognizing that parents are the primary educators of their children in matters of faith and morals, this curriculum includes a parental component. We have enclosed a copy of *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* Parent's Guide, a booklet that summarizes the contents of the new program chapter by chapter. It will not only inform you of the beautiful message we will be sharing with your child(ren), but offer you tools and encouragement to confidently discuss these critical issues with them.

Please note that the last pages of each chapter provide questions and family applications to foster meaningful conversation at home. We will begin teaching *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* on [start date]. We encourage you to follow along in the Parent's Guide.

Please contact me should you have questions and to schedule a time to view the Parent Overview DVD that we showed at the Parent Information Session. It is a thorough explanation of the entire program presented by one of the authors of the curriculum. You can also visit TOBforTeens.com for more information on the program.

Thank you for your time and interest in this important stage of your child's spiritual development.

Sincerely,

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