

## 1. What is the Theology of the Body?

The Theology of the Body refers to the series of 129 lectures given by Blessed 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. As commentator Emily Stimpson describes it,

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

Theology of the Body for Teens is the first published curriculum that applies the Theology of the Body to the lives of teens and pre-teens, specifically addressing questions relating to chastity and sexuality. The *Middle School Edition* is a multifaceted, eight-part program that can be used in a variety of different contexts.

## 3. Is this something that will really interest middle school students?

Absolutely! Many middle school students do not understand their sexuality, their identity, or their purpose in life. 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 middle school students be interested in the Theology of the Body, they crave it—even though they may not know it at a cognitive level. They are beginning to yearn 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 middle school students in a way that speaks to their hearts.

## 4. Is this a chastity program?

Yes, but it is also much more. While *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* addresses the real questions middle school students 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 much more. It offers a new language that is rooted in human freedom. The Theology of the Body 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 middle school students 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 middle school students 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 middle schooler today than at any other time. The wounds many teens and pre-teens experience are deep and manifold.

Today's middle schoolers 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 have already lost their way, and in the process, have begun to lose 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: Middle School Edition* do for my students?**

*Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* will help them understand who they are and 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 program 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 program 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 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. What setting is this program designed for?**

*Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* works anywhere middle school students meet. It can be used in a middle school classroom, a youth group study, a CCD program, home school study, or as an after-school program.

**10. What is the age range recommended for the *Middle School Edition*?**

This program is intended for those in sixth through eighth grades. 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. We also strongly encourage you to conduct a Parent Info Session. A free download can be found at [www.TOBFforTeens.com](http://www.TOBFforTeens.com).

**11. Aren't the concepts taught in the Theology of the Body too lofty for middle school students?**

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 the *Middle School Edition* to match the current faith formation level of today's Catholic middle school student. The students may, at times, be challenged by the Theology of the Body, but its content is perfectly suited for a young Catholic audience.

## **12. How explicit is the material covered in the *Middle School Edition*?**

Our curriculum is faithful to the language of John Paul II's original lectures. As such, it presents the Church's teachings on 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 middle school student.

## **13. Does the *Middle School Edition* address such sensitive topics as homosexuality, masturbation, pornography, and contraception?**

Yes. As mentioned previously, *Theology of the Body for Teens* presents Catholic teaching on these topics and others with great pastoral sensitivity. Since most Catholic middle school students are aware of such issues in today's culture, we thought it was important to address them. However, some of the more sensitive topics, such as masturbation and same-sex attraction, are only found in the Leader's Guide, not in the Student Workbook, to be left to the complete discretion of the leader.

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

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

## **15. Is there any prerequisite learning my middle school students should do before engaging the *Theology of the Body for Teens* program?**

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

## **16. Is there a parent's guide for the *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition*?**

Yes. The Parent's Guide serves as an excellent and informative overview of the *Middle School Edition* curriculum. While it has been specifically written for parents of students 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 middle school student. It includes summaries of each of the eight chapters contained in the Student Workbook; a basic introduction to the Theology of the Body; study questions for parents to discuss with their children; and family applications to help create and foster a Theology of the Body culture in the home. There is also a Parent Session at the end of DVD disc #3.

## **17. Can this curriculum be presented to coed classes or do you suggest separating students by gender?**

The authors believe that there are benefits to segregating students into single-sex groups when studying this material and encourage such an approach whenever possible. The willingness of teens and pre-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 the curriculum contains ample discussion questions. Teachers and youth ministers should take care to control the discussion, however, and keep immature behavior to a minimum.

## **18. What is the length of each lesson?**

Each chapter in the *Middle School Edition* can be presented in a variety of time formats. The length of each lesson can vary and will depend upon the time spent on discussion, activities, and the needs of the class. See the free *Guide to the Leader's Guide*, which provides different schema for various class scenarios. This resource is available as a free download at [www.TOBFforTeens.com](http://www.TOBFforTeens.com).

## **19. Is there a DVD series for *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition*?**

Yes. Each of the eight lessons of *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* has a high-definition companion video presentation running between 15 and 20 minutes total per session. Each presentation contains lively instruction and commentary by the authors and other experts, fun man-on-the-street interviews, and animated trivia in order to provide a relevant, educational, and enjoyable experience for middle school students. It also contains a thirty-three-minute presentation and summary of the program geared specifically toward parents.

## **20. What materials do I need to teach *Theology of the Body for Teens*?**

Each teacher, presenter, and facilitator should have a Leader's Guide. Each group should have a set of the DVDs. Each student needs a Student Workbook to follow along, take notes, and to fully participate in all activities. It is also highly recommended that a copy of the Parent's Guide booklet be given to the parents of participating teens (See question 16).

## **21. Is the content difficult to teach?**

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

## **22. Has *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* been granted the Imprimatur? Is it approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)?**

Both the Leader's Guide and Student Workbook of the *Middle School Edition* have been granted the *Imprimatur* by Archbishop Gregory Aymond of New Orleans. 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, it neither requires nor can 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*.

## **23. Who are the authors of *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* and what are their credentials?**

The primary authors of the program—Brian Butler, Jason Evert, and Colin and Aimee MacIver—are recognized leaders in education, youth ministry, and chastity education. Here is some biographical information on each of the authors:

**Brian Butler** is the co-founder and president of Dumb Ox Productions, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to chastity and vocation formation for teens and pre-teens. He has more than fifteen years of youth ministry experience and is co-author of the *Theology of the Body for Teens: High School Edition*. He and his wife, Lisa, reside in the archdiocese of New Orleans with their four children.

**Jason Evert** is a best-selling author of a dozen books, including *Theology of His/Her Body* and, along with his wife, Crystalina, and Brian Butler, is the co-author of the *Theology of the Body for Teens: High School Edition*. He speaks throughout the world to more than 100,000 teens each year. Jason and Crystalina live in San Diego with their four children.

**Colin and Aimee MacIver** teach theology at St. Scholastica Academy in Covington, Louisiana, and have extensive experience leading teens through the *Theology of the Body for Teens* program. Colin travels nationally and internationally as a team member and speaker for Dumb Ox Productions, bringing a message of purpose and purity to youth. Aimee previously worked as a public relations writer for Franciscan University of Steubenville. The MacIvers welcomed their greatest endeavor when they adopted their first child, Leo, in the spring of 2010.

**24. Can a teacher or youth minister use portions of the program or do all eight 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: Middle School Edition* 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.

**25. How much do the *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* materials cost?**

The retail price of the Leader's Guide is \$24.95, the Student Workbook is \$12.95, the DVD series is \$79.95, and the Parent's Guide is \$8.95. Bulk discounts to educators and parishes are available. Prior to placing an order, please call the Ascension Press at 1-800-376-0520 for more information.

**26. Can this material be used in a retreat format?**

Yes. Using the Leader's Guide, Student Workbook, and DVD set, the authors have developed an easy to follow weekend Retreat Guide that is available as a free download at [www.TOBforTeens.com](http://www.TOBforTeens.com).

**27. Can *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* replace a middle school sexual morality or chastity program?**

Absolutely. This program speaks to the heart of what sexual morality and chastity programs are based upon. The *Middle School Edition* 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.

**28. 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.

### **29. Does one need to be trained to teach this curriculum?**

Although the content was written in an intuitive manner and most educators 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 anyone interested in bringing the High School and/or Middle School Editions to their youth. Visit [www.TOBforTeens.com](http://www.TOBforTeens.com) for more details on upcoming Trainings and/or how to schedule your own.

### **30. 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.

### **31. What is involved in the full-day Training?**

A *Theology of the Body for Teens* 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. An interactive and comprehensive question-and-answer session, during which the most common questions middle school students have about issues of sexuality are discussed, is included in the training session.

### **32. Who should attend the training?**

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

### **33. Have some dioceses already implemented the *Theology of the Body for Teens* curriculum?**

Yes. *Theology of the Body for Teens* has been implemented in many diocesan schools and parish religious education programs. Several diocesan Training Sessions have also been conducted around the country. Visit [www.TOBforTeens.com](http://www.TOBforTeens.com) to view a list of upcoming Trainings.

### **34. How can I integrate *Theology of the Body for Teens* in my middle school theology curriculum?**

The *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* material can easily be used as a supplement for courses in morality, basic Church teachings, 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.

### **35. 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. Visit [www.TOBforTeens.com](http://www.TOBforTeens.com) for the free download *Guide to the Leader’s Guide* for easy to follow steps and suggestions for each chapter with different meeting time options.

### **36. Is the Leader's Guide needed to teach the class?**

Even if you are already an expert in the Theology of the Body, the Leader's Guide is essential. It is filled with demonstrations, explanations, song suggestions and helpful hints for applying this material to the lives of middle school students. The Leader's Guide is a fantastic resource that both experienced teachers and "rookie" catechists will find helpful in teaching the program.

### **37. 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 thoroughly 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 a training. In addition, the Leader's Guide is full of great notes and tips to help any adult understand how to present the materials, so be not afraid! Just be sure to thoroughly review and have a firm grasp of the program before presenting it to your group.

The free Guide to the Guide available at [www.TOBforTeens.com](http://www.TOBforTeens.com) can also assist in preparing to teach the program.

### **38. 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 students between sixth and eighth grades. It can, however, be used as a dynamic and effective supplement to a confirmation curriculum.

### **39. 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.

### **40. 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, many free support resources are available at [www.TOBforTeens.com](http://www.TOBforTeens.com), including the Guide to the Leader's Guide, a Retreat Guide, Parent's Information Session Guide, chapter overviews, sample chapter from the workbook, posters, flyers, bulletin announcements and more.

Remember, Ascension Press is here to answer your questions and to help you implement a successful program, so please call 1-800-367-0520 if we can be of assistance.

**For more information, visit  
[www.TOBforTeens.com](http://www.TOBforTeens.com) or  
call 1-800-376-0520**

**THEOLOGY  
OF THE BODY  
*for Teens*  
MIDDLE SCHOOL EDITION**