

HOW TO PLAN, PROMOTE, AND RUN A THEOLOGY OF THE BODY STUDY GROUP

Running a Theology of the Body Study Group will be a rewarding experience for you and the participants in your group. We believe your efforts will bear great fruit in your own life and the lives of those who join you on this grand discovery.

The following pages provide basic information on starting, promoting, and facilitating a study group using any of *The Gift* Study systems, including the one-part *Your Call to Greatness* perfect for those new to the TOB; the eight-part *An Introduction to the Theology of the Body: Discovering the Master Plan for Your Life* for those ready to take up a serious study; or the 16-part *Into the Heart: A Journey Through the Theology of the Body* for those desiring to go deeper into the profound teachings. While this document would also be helpful in running a *Theology of the Body for Teens* program, many excellent resources, including free downloads, have been designed specifically for that program and can be found at www.TOBforTeens.com.



Although the information which follows should suffice in helping you plan, promote, and coordinate your study group, if you have any questions along the way, please call us at 800-376-0520 for assistance.

Preliminary Work

1) After you get approval from your pastor or the appropriate person at your parish and determine which study to take up, select a team of people (the “Study Group Team”) to handle the various positions needed to plan, promote, and facilitate each session successfully. The list of persons/positions is as follows:

- *Coordinator/Facilitator* will likely be the liaison with the parish and also conduct the large group discussions.
- *Small Group Facilitators* are responsible for leading the small group discussions. Depending on the turnout, you may need several small group facilitators. The Coordinator should work with the small group facilitators in advance, including viewing of the DVDs and discussing all the small group questions found in the workbook.
- *Publicity Manager* is responsible for the promotion of the study.
- *Hospitality Manager* is responsible for greeters, as well as refreshments, if they are planned.
- *Facilities Manager* is responsible for handling opening and closing the venue at which you will meet, arranging for tables, chairs, TV/DVD player, etc.
- *Prayer Coordinator* is responsible for planning a prayer effort that will provide the necessary spiritual support for the study group.

2) The following tasks will need to be done:

1. Set the dates and times of the program study. *Your Call to Greatness* is a one hour DVD presentation. The *Introduction* and *Into the Heart* both consist of 30 minute DVD presentations. So, for example, if you choose to begin with the *Intro*, you could select 8 consecutive Tuesdays. Plan on at least 90 minutes for each session. Here is one sample format:

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|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Arrival | 7:00 p.m. | Break | 7:40 to 7:50 p.m. |
| Social/welcome | 7:00 to 7:10 p.m. | Group discussion | 7:50 to 8:25 p.m. |
| DVD presentation | 7:10 to 7:40 p.m. | Closing prayer/petitions | 8:25 to 8:30 p.m. |

2. Confirm the facility you will use by contacting the appropriate parish staff member.
3. Create the budget, if any, that will be needed to pay for the DVDs, promotional flyers and Student Workbooks. *Note:* you should determine at this time if you will charge a modest fee to participants to help cover the costs for the workbooks and other expenses, or if the parish or other sponsor will cover the expenses. One option is to have a free-will collection or donation basket at one or more of the meetings. Bulk discounts are available for the student workbooks.
4. Set dates to train your small group facilitators, if necessary.
5. Produce flyers and posters or download them for free at www.TheologyoftheBody.com.
6. Arrange for the appropriate TV equipment and DVD player. Confirm that the other facility items (tables, chairs, etc.) are ready to go.
7. Determine if you will have snacks, coffee, name tags, and other items of hospitality. If so, arrange for these.
8. Pray (and have others pray) for the success of the Theology of the Body Study Group series. Suggested prayers are included in all Leader's Guides.

Facilitating Group Discussion

Study Questions are provided at the end of each session in both the Student Workbooks and this Leader's Guide for all studies. To help you facilitate group discussion, answers to the questions are included in the Leader's Guides.

1. *Understanding the questions and responses*

Some of the questions have actual, expected answers. Others may have a number of potential answers and are designed to draw participants in and help them interact with what they have learned. Often a great richness of response comes out in the group discussion, where each person brings a different perspective. Everyone benefits from this. The "answers" you will find in the Leader's Guide are not exhaustive but are offered as a guide. Consider them "Food for Thought" (FFT).

2. *The Goal of Group Discussion*

The primary goal of group discussion is to help participants appropriate, "digest," and/or apply the main teaching points of each session: to make the specific points of the Theology of the Body practical.

3. The Role of the Leader

Though not absolutely necessary, it would be helpful for the leader to have some experience or training in group facilitation. The role of the leader is not to teach—and it is not even so much to get people to answer questions correctly. Rather, it is to help draw out of the participants what they have learned from the talks.

4. Keeping Time

The amount of time available for group discussion will vary from group to group. We recommend that you allow plenty of time to get through the study questions and for group discussion. You may find it helpful to assign one person to assist the facilitator by keeping track of the time.

5. Keeping Focused

Often the questions provided will lead people into related areas that, however interesting, are off the subject and steal time from the point at hand. One way to handle this is to keep a log of these questions. When one comes up, simply write it down and delay discussion until the end of the session.

Advertising/Promoting the Study

Within your parish

It goes without saying that effectively advertising your study is a key component to its success. Perhaps you want to present this study only to those within your parish. If that is the case, we suggest you communicate with posters, flyers, bulletin announcements (several weeks prior to the first day of registration), and pulpit announcements (during the registration weekends). We have posters available for you to customize.

Letters can be sent to each household in your parish inviting parishioners to the study, or if you've had studies in the past, letters can be sent to former students, encouraging them to invite a friend to the next study.

Outside your parish

If it is your intention to open your study to people outside of your parish, there are several ways to advertise. We suggest you send letters advertising your study to surrounding parishes, along with a poster and/or a flyer that can be duplicated and handed out or inserted in their bulletins.

Call your diocesan newspaper to explore the cost of placing an ad and ask your local Catholic radio station if they will advertise your study.

Registrations

It is important that the registration process be informative and efficient, since this will be your first contact with participants. When beginning a new study, consider taking registrations after weekend Masses at least 6-8 weeks prior to the start of the study. Be sure to advertise in your bulletin and/or from the pulpit when registrations will be taken.

In some parishes registration cards, along with a letter from the pastor announcing the study, are sent to all members of the parish inviting them to and informing them of the details of the study.

Cut-off dates and late registrations depend entirely up to your preference, but we recommend you communicate a cut-off date to encourage sign-up. This also helps you determine how many Student Workbooks you need to order.

Setting up Your Discussion Groups

You are now ready to set up your discussion groups. Set a date for your core team to meet. When you meet, we recommend you first spend time in prayer, asking God's blessings on all those who have registered for the study, and that His will be done concerning the dynamics of the individual discussion groups that will now be formed.

Your discussion groups can be formed in several different ways: Men only, women only, married couples, singles, etc. We have had positive feedback about each of these group arrangements; however we often recommend and encourage men and women to be in separate discussion group settings.

If you have further questions, please contact the Ascension Press marketing and customer support center toll-free at 1-800-376-0520. We are ready to assist you in making your study a great success. We can also offer many helpful suggestions and resources, including posters, flyers, and bulletin announcements. Visit www.TheologyoftheBody.com for these and additional free support materials.

When planning a *Theology of the Body for Teens* study, be sure to visit www.TOBforTeens.com for many excellent resources and free downloads, including a *Facilitators Guide*, a *Retreat Guide* and a *Parent Information Session Guide*.

