

DISCOVER THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

By Father Robert Sprott, OFM

Free Study Guide for Individuals or Groups

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Contents

[About This Series](#)

[How to Use This Guide](#)

[Introduction](#): (Video, 25 min.)

PART ONE: THE WORDS OF CHRIST

Chapter 1, [Christ Appeals to the “Beginning”](#) (Videos 2 and 3, 25 min.)

Chapter 2, [Christ Appeals to the Human Heart](#) (Videos 4 and 5, 50 min. per session)

Chapter 3, [Christ Appeals to the Resurrection](#) (Videos 6 and 7, 50 min. per session)

PART TWO: THE SACRAMENT

[Contemporary Issues](#) in the Light of *Theology of the Body* (Video 8, 42 min.)

Chapter 1, [The Dimension of Covenant and of Grace](#) (Videos 9, 45 min.)

Chapter 2, [The Dimension of Sign](#) (Videos 10 and 11, 50 min. per session)

Chapter 3, [He Gave Them the Law of Life as Their Inheritance](#) (Videos 12 and 13, 50 min. per session)

[Theology of the Body Resources](#)

[About the Presenter](#)



About This Series

Discover Theology of the Body is a twelve-part video series given by Father Robert Sprott and intended for personal or group use. It follows the content of Pope Saint John Paul II's book *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, translated by Michael Waldstein and published by Pauline Books & Media. Except for the Introduction (Video 1 and Video 2), the sessions are roughly 45–50 minutes each. You may find the video series at lightalongtheway.com.

In this series, you will not only gain a greater appreciation of the Sacrament of Matrimony, but also:

- a deeper spirit of amazement and adoration of the mystery of the Holy Trinity,
- an understanding of the call to celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven,
- a clearer sense of what it means to say “I believe in the resurrection of the body,”
- and surprising insight into the problem with birth control.

All this and more comes together under the *Theology of the Body*.

How to Use This Guide

Each section of this free guide corresponds to Father Robert Sprott's video series, *Discover Theology of the Body*, which presents the content of *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (TOB). After watching each video, you can use the guide to deepen your understanding.

The guide's referencing system will help you locate the texts being studied. That is, the guide will refer to the talk(s) by number, along with the specific paragraph/section. (For example, the Pope introduces the theme of “original innocence” in TOB 16:3.) However, these references are simply informational; use of the book is not necessary for you to benefit from this video series.

This guide also contains key terms and themes, and points for personal reflection or for discussion if the guide is used in a group setting.) Not all of the “key terms and themes” are covered in the videos, but they are included as an extra feature for those who would like to further explore a video topic.

The stories that follow the points for discussion or reflection may also be helpful in diving beneath the surface of the chapter's contents. Each chapter recommends a particular psalm that can be prayed at the beginning and end of the session, as well as material for personal prayer.

You will also find recommendations of papal documents and related books for further reading. This guide can be used by individuals or by groups as indicated in the following section.



For Group Use

Connect a projector and speakers to the computer, making sure that every person in the room will be able to see and hear well. If you are streaming the video sessions <http://pauline.org/discoverTOB>, make sure that the meeting room has a strong and consistent Internet connection. Otherwise, you might face distractions in the case of inconsistent bandwidth or buffering. Purchasing and downloading the videos to your computer or device can help insure uninterrupted viewing. The downloadable guide can be copied freely.

In these guides, *points for discussion* cover the content of a complete chapter (usually two video sessions). They can be used immediately after each video session or as a final “chapter” review before starting the next two-session chapter. There is no need to cover each of the discussion points. They are intended to help each member of the group unpack the insights of *Theology of the Body* and develop a “feel” for how to apply these principles to current issues. Daily life brings up many questions concerning what it means to be human, male and female “in the image of God.”

Theology of the Body touches deep chords in the human heart. It may spark intense personal reactions—positive or negative—so it is important that a facilitator or group leader keep discussion focused on *principles*, not on *persons*.

Introduction

Video 1: Trailer (25 min.)
For Prayer: Psalm 111

“Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self.”

Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 24

Points for Discussion or Personal Reflection

- ✿ What brings you to this program? Where did you first hear about the *Theology of the Body*? How do you hope to benefit from this study?
- ✿ A layman, Jan Tyranowski, played a fundamental role in the young Karol Wojtyla’s spiritual journey by introducing him to the writings of Saint John of the Cross. Likewise, married couples were candid in sharing their experiences in a way that allowed Wojtyla to develop the expertise in sexual ethics that grounds the *Theology of the Body*. How did these lay persons “minister” to the whole Church through their relationship with the future pope and saint?



- ✿ How can a pope offer a teaching about marriage that lay people can take seriously?
- ✿ Many voices in contemporary culture deny the “givenness” of the human body and even divorce it from the human soul. How do you anticipate that the *Theology of the Body* can offer a message of healing in its way of taking the body seriously as a kind of “revelation” of God? (This theme will especially be developed in the videos for Chapter 1.)

For a list of papal and other Church documents that develop the insights of the *Theology of the Body*, please see our “Theology of the Body Resources” section.

PART ONE: THE WORDS OF CHRIST

CHAPTER ONE

Christ Appeals to the “Beginning”

Videos 2 (25 min.) and 3 (50 min.)
 For prayer: Psalm 8
 Matthew 19:3–8
 Genesis 1:1–31; 2:4–25
 TOB 1–23

“The family is . . . the joyous confirmation of God’s blessing upon the masterpiece of creation.”
 Pope Francis (Philadelphia, September 27, 2015)

Key Themes and Terms

Communion of persons (originally from Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 12)
 Freedom of the gift
 Ethos of the gift
 Original innocence
 Original nakedness
 Original solitude
 Original unity
 Primordial sacrament
 Spousal meaning of the body



Points for Discussion or Personal Reflection

VIDEO 2

- ✿ Judging from the quotations in the video, what does the style of the Pope’s text say about the place he intended these teachings to hold in terms of the “ordinary magisterium”? (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2034.)
- ✿ How is “being” a body-person different from “having” a body? Which of these does Pope John Paul II build on?
- ✿ How does each biblical creation story highlight the creation of man and woman (including sexual differentiation) and their unique relationship with each other and with the Creator? In hearing these stories again, what strikes you in a new or unexpected way?
- ✿ What difference does it make that God has been revealed as a communion of self-giving love—as a Trinity? If this is what it means to be God, what does that say about being made in God’s image? How is this expressed in the human body?
- ✿ Why does Pope John Paul speak of marriage as a “primordial sacrament”? How does this affect your understanding of the Christian sacraments in general?
- ✿ What does “original nakedness” (without shame) say about the human person as created by God? What does the introduction of shame as a human experience reveal?

VIDEO 3

- ✿ When reading the book of Genesis, one can easily get lost in discussions about the “seven days of creation” taken in a literal sense, or in endlessly detailed analyses of original languages and editorial threads from this epoch or that. But Pope John Paul’s approach to the text may be even more challenging: reading these ancient stories in a way that sheds light *on the life we live today*. What did you find surprising in the way Pope John Paul took up the biblical narrative?
- ✿ How does a “sacramental worldview” (seeing the material cosmos “charged with the grandeur of God,” as poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote) differ from a materialist or consumerist mindset?
- ✿ What is the difference between “taking” and “receiving” in the context of any gift?

Real-Life Stories to Ponder

What in the following love story echoes the first meeting of Adam and Eve? What are your hopes for the couple after this first encounter? What are those hopes for them based on?



At First Sight

Let's say I wasn't open to the idea. "A blind date? Not gonna happen." But I gave in. And so Kim's boyfriend arranged dates for me and for another girl in our circle, Christy. My wardrobe choice made it clear that I did not have high hopes for the evening. (Kim commented that I looked like an Amish librarian.)

As it happened, my date didn't even show up. Christy's did.

"My name is Jerry Don Lenaburg and I am from Collinsville, Oklahoma." He laughed when he realized that it appeared he had two dates for the evening. Then he said he was a midshipman and "planned for all contingencies." He was handsome, tall, blond, blue-eyed, and he wore that Navy uniform well.

Jerry took turns dancing with each of us. He told us all about this foreign land called Oklahoma with its cows and horses. After about an hour, he pulled over a friend of his (tall, dark, and handsome) and introduced him to Christy. I was *stunned*. Jerry wanted to spend the rest of the evening with the Amish librarian.

We danced some more, laughed continuously, and had the very best time. At the end of the night, Jerry walked me back to the car and sweetly gave me a kiss. *Oh, be still my heart.* . . . Later, he told me that it had been his first kiss and he had known I was the "right one" to give it to.

I had been on five dates in my life . . . and this was uncharted territory.¹

For Personal Reflection

- ✿ How does the mystery of God as a communion of persons challenge your understanding of human fulfillment and happiness?
- ✿ Concerning the "ethos of the gift," Father Sprott comments, "Human beings only become what they are meant to be by a gift of themselves. This is what love is, specifically sacrificial love." Recall a way in which you were touched by such a sacrificial gift of self.
- ✿ Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, is the fullest possible human expression of the "law of the gift" at every moment of his life. Choose a favorite gospel scene and contemplate how Jesus lived the "ethos of the gift" in his public ministry.
- ✿ Of the four "original" conditions of the human person (original solitude, original unity, original nakedness, original innocence), which do you feel more drawn to reflect on, and why?
- ✿ Jot down (or review any notes you may have taken during the video) points that challenge some of your assumptions about the biblical narrative, or about the human body and its meaning. Did anything either provoke a feeling of resistance in you or spark a fascination? Take these to prayer.



For Further Reading

On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World (5–6)
Opening Address of the Humanum Colloquium (Pope Francis, November 2014)
The Joy of Love (221)

Additional Resources

Gaitley, Michael E., MIC. *The 'One Thing' Is Three: How the Most Holy Trinity Explains Everything*. Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press, 2012.
West, Christopher. *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's Man and Woman He Created Them*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2007.

CHAPTER TWO

Christ Appeals to the Human Heart

Videos 4 and 5 (50 min. each)
For prayer: Psalm 139
Mt 5:27–28
TOB 24–86

“The ‘heart’ has become a battlefield between love and concupiscence” (TOB 32:3)

“Purity is the glory of the human body before God. It is the glory of God in the human body, through which masculinity and femininity are manifested.” (TOB 57:3)

Key Themes and Terms

Concupiscence	Purity of heart
Desire	Redemption of the body
Eros	Self-mastery
Ethos	Shame
Historical man	Temperance
Life according to the Spirit	



Points for Discussion or Personal Reflection

VIDEO 4

- ✿ In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ does not condemn or accuse, but makes an “appeal” to the human heart, calling it to more than what comes “naturally” to fallen humanity. What can ordinary believers do to echo Jesus’ “appeal,” inviting others to hope for even more than they dream of in their marriage and family life?
- ✿ It is not hard to find philosophies in which God (or the concept of God) is thought of as a rival or threat to human flourishing. How does the creation story as presented by Pope John Paul respond to this defensive worldview?
- ✿ How was the original sin a sin of idolatry? Why would that have had such a disastrous effect on human relationships?
- ✿ Pope John Paul observes that in their “original unity” the first couple was “male and female,” but when “their eyes were opened” to “the knowledge of good and evil,” they were set against each other: “male *or* female.” Why is this like a wound in the very heart of a person created for communion?
- ✿ Male domination over woman is not a “punishment from God” but a result of lost communion with each other, a replacement of “gift” with “grasping.” What are the subtle signs of this in today’s culture?

VIDEO 5

- ✿ The eruption of concupiscence corresponds with the introduction of the human experience of shame. Shame and concupiscence have become something of a “matched set” in human experience. How does Pope John Paul interpret shame as something positive?
- ✿ In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus zeroes in on the “look” that reduces another person to an object, characterizing this as “adultery of the heart.” It is even possible, Pope John Paul said, for this sinful and destructive look to take place within a marriage, when a husband treats his wife “only as an object for the satisfaction of drives” (TOB 43:3). How does the Pope’s interpretation uphold the dignity of woman and of the integrity of marriage?
- ✿ Pornography addiction is a widespread and destructive reality in our culture. How is pornography “adultery in the heart” even when the “partner” is not a person at all, but only an objectified image? How can insights from *Theology of the Body* help someone begin to take steps to overcome porn addiction? (For Pope John Paul’s comments on the differences between pornographic and artistic depictions of the human body, see TOB 60–63.)



- ✿ Puritanism might not seem to be an issue today (outside of a few fringe groups), but the Pope warns about an “ethos of suspicion” that blames the body for human failures or struggles. It is not rare to hear someone assert “my body is not me” or “I can do what I want with my body.” How does the “hook-up culture” reveal this kind of devaluing of body-soul unity and of the spousal meaning of the body? How can we witness in an attractive way to the personal dignity of the human body?
- ✿ Pope John Paul insists “It is typical of rationalism to make a radical contrast in man between spirit and body, between body and spirit. But man is a person in the unity of his body and his spirit. *The body can never be reduced to mere matter.*” He also warned of a “new Manichaeism” that has led “to human sexuality being regarded more as an area for manipulation and exploitation than . . . wonder” (*Letter to Families*, 19). What are some contemporary signs of this misconception?
- ✿ Pope John Paul observed that condemnation of the body “might—and may always be—a loophole for avoiding the requirements set in the Gospel” (TOB 44:6). Which “requirements” is he referring to? What kind of conversion are we continually called to in this regard?
- ✿ “Full and mature spontaneity in relationships that are born from the perennial attraction of masculinity and femininity . . . (are) the gradual fruit of the discernment of the impulses of one’s own heart” (TOB 48:2). How can a healthy self-possession gained by self-mastery safeguard freedom and genuine spontaneity in the relationship of man and woman? What is “healthy” self-possession? Why is self-mastery an important element of the “complete gift of self”?
- ✿ What is the hope offered by the possibility of the “redemption of the body”? What are some of the ways this redemption already reaches us? What are some of the effects it can already have in our most intimate relationships (beginning with our own body/soul unity)?

Real-Life Stories to Ponder

In different ways, both Ben and Madeleine committed “adultery of the heart.” What forms of self-mastery could help Ben turn his admiring eyes back toward his wife? What forms of self-mastery would be more suitable for Madeleine?

Ben and Madeleine

Ben habitually flirted with women at work. He considered it harmless. When he attended a summer party with his wife Madeleine, he admired how the other female guests looked in their bikinis in the hot tub. Then he surprised himself by actually kissing one of them.

He didn’t consider it important enough to tell Madeleine.



One day Ben was casually looking at his wife's computer and noticed that her e-mail program was open. Curious, he began reading and found ongoing conversations between Madeleine and one of her ex-boyfriends. He confronted her and she insisted that the conversations amounted to a bit of harmless flirting, even though the ex-boyfriend was urging her to meet up in person.

Realizing how wounded he was by Madeleine's e-mail exchange made Ben take stock and consider how his own actions might be hurting his wife and how flirting could lead to more serious infidelity.²

For Personal Reflection

- ✿ What are some caricatures or myths about self-mastery that might keep you from appreciating it?
- ✿ “Anything that holds us back from God’s way of holiness works to enslave us” (Father Sprott). Where in your life do you need to grow in freedom? What is the first step you can take to become freer in this area?
- ✿ In a place of prayer, at a time when you are free enough to quietly engage with the Scriptures, reread Matthew 5:27–28. Imagine yourself in the crowd just as you are today, with all your personal history and current responsibilities, listening to Jesus. Hear him repeat what he just said (Mt 5:27–28) and look directly at you. What happens within you as your eyes meet his?
- ✿ How can the beatitude of “purity of heart” express itself in your life and family relationships?
- ✿ Jot down (or review any notes you may have taken during the video) points that challenge some of your assumptions about the biblical narrative, or about the human body and its meaning. Did anything either provoke a feeling of resistance in you or spark a fascination? Take these to prayer.

For Further Reading

Letter to Families (19)

God Is Love (2–11)

The Joy of Love (Chapter 5)

Catechism of the Catholic Church (2515–2519, 1809)

Additional Resources

Bransfield, J. Brian. *The Human Person According to John Paul II*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2010.



LeJeune, Marcel. *Cleansed: A Catholic Guide to Freedom from Porn*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2016.

Santos, Karee and Manuel P. Santos, MD. *The Four Keys to Everlasting Love: How Your Catholic Marriage Can Bring You Joy for a Lifetime*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2016.

CHAPTER THREE

Christ Appeals to the Resurrection

Videos 6 and 7 (50 min. each)

For prayer: Psalm 16

Mt 22:23–30 (parallels in Mk 12:18–27 and Lk 20:27–40);

1 Cor 15:42–49; Mt 19:8–12

TOB 64–86

“It is a characteristic feature of the human heart to accept even difficult demands in the name of love.” (TOB 79:9)

Key Themes and Terms

Continenence “for the kingdom of heaven”

Redemption of the body

Divinization (Greek: *theosis*)

Resurrection

Eschatological

Virginal

Points for Discussion or Personal Reflection

VIDEO 6

- ✿ As a group, name some criteria you can use to recognize when a concept about life after death is consistent with the teachings of Christ. Using those criteria, address some common ideas about death and the afterlife (for example, reincarnation; the deceased “becoming angels”; the soul forever “released” from the body, etc.). What is the Christian vision of resurrected life?
- ✿ The Pope uses terms from art and poetry to describe the spiritualization of the person (in the fullness of his or her humanity) in the age of resurrection. What is his “trptych” in *Theology of the Body*? How does poetic language help him to make his point about a grace we have not yet experienced: the life of resurrection?
- ✿ A constant theme throughout the *Theology of the Body* is “the complete gift of self.” How does the complete gift of self appear in this chapter? How is this “Good News”?



VIDEO 7

- ✿ Speaking with poetic language, Pope John Paul uses the terms “virginity” and “virginal” in a much fuller sense than we might expect. What is your reaction to finding the notion expanded from the common understanding (defined primarily in negative terms or considered merely a biological state) to a quality of the risen body and fulfillment of the “spousal’ meaning of the body” (TOB 68:3)?
- ✿ In the Old Testament, children are not only a natural blessing. According to Father Sprott, they are “the bearers into the next generation of God’s revelation.” Children are a specifically religious blessing. In this light, Jesus’ words about celibacy “for the kingdom of heaven” are “scandalous . . . surprising . . . and unwelcome.” How, then, can we say that the celibate life freely chosen for the kingdom of heaven affirms the dignity and truth of Christian marriage?
- ✿ Since other world religions know and recommend the practice of celibacy (including lifelong celibacy), what makes celibacy “for the kingdom of heaven” a uniquely Christian vocation? (Be alert against practical but mistaken notions like “celibacy keeps a person free to do more useful work.”)
- ✿ Celibacy “for the kingdom of heaven” involves the lifelong renunciation of the great blessings of marriage and family life. How does this choice highlight the dignity of marriage and the freedom of the gift of self? What does this radical choice say about the resurrected life, which is our hope in Christ? How is the life of celibacy a testimony that anticipates the future, a sign that the body’s end is not death?

Real-Life Stories to Ponder

The perfection of Christian life is measured by love. How is a religious sister’s consecration a way of living the “spousal meaning of the body”? How do consecrated celibacy and marriage, two very different ways of living in view of the “life of the world to come,” shed light on one another?

Sister’s Story

It was more than forty years ago, the year of preparation for my final vows. I was twenty-five years old. I had waited long years for this; it was all I had ever wanted—to belong completely to Christ. But as the time to make my final vows drew nearer, something else was awakening in me. . . . I wanted to be a mother, a *biological* mother with my own children.

I very much believed that consecrated women are *spiritual* mothers, but would that be enough? Never to hold my own child? Never to be held by a man who loved me above everyone else? Never to be kissed or know the depth of human love? I prayed a lot and sought advice, but the tempest inside me did not calm. I could not see the Lord on the



water at all. However, one still voice kept rising above all the other turbulent voices: “It is I. Do not be afraid. You are mine and I love you. Trust me.”

The worst battle of all raged the day before my perpetual profession of vows and continued into the night. Finally, just hours before I would say, “I offer, give, and consecrate myself to you for all my life,” I surrendered. I said to Jesus, “You desire me and I desire you. These other desires I surrender to you, regardless of what they cost me now or will cost me later, because you are worth more than anything.”

I would continue to have some conflicting desires for a few more years, but as I approached the altar rail that morning to pronounce my final vows, I knew I had chosen the “better part.”³

For Personal Reflection

- ✿ How does Pope John Paul’s rich presentation of the resurrection of the body refine or challenge your understanding and/or appreciation of the final article of the Creed, “I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body”? How can you use these insights to cultivate a deeper sense of Christian hope? Does anyone you know need that hope right now?
- ✿ Are you surprised by the insight that masculinity and femininity are more than just “skin deep” and will be part of our glorified nature in the resurrection? What does this mean in terms of your own appreciation of your body? What else does the resurrection of the body suggest to you in terms of living in a holy manner?
- ✿ Share “vocation stories” with someone who is firmly established in a different state of life than your own. How is the motivation of love expressed?
- ✿ If you are married (or hope to be), what does the witness of consecrated celibacy say to you about the complete gift of self as lived in the Sacrament of Marriage? How does it invite you to still more? If you are living celibacy “for the kingdom of heaven,” how does the witness of Christian marriage enrich your vocation? How does it invite you to a still more radical consecration?
- ✿ Jot down (or review any notes you may have taken during the video) points that challenge some of your assumptions about the biblical narrative, or about the human body and its meaning. Did anything either provoke a feeling of resistance in you or spark a fascination? Take these to prayer.

For Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church (988–1005)



Additional Resources

Bransfield, J. Brian. *Life Everlasting: The Mystery and the Promise*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2015.

Eden, Dawn. *The Thrill of the Chaste: Finding Fulfillment while Keeping Your Clothes On*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2015.

PART TWO: THE SACRAMENT

CHAPTER ONE

The Dimension of Covenant and Grace

Video 8 (42 min.) covers Contemporary Issues in the Light of Theology of the Body. No additional discussion points are offered for this video session.

Video 9 (45 min.)
For prayer: Psalm 45
Ephesians 5:21–33
TOB 87–102

“This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church.”

Ephesians 5:32

“Marriage corresponds to the vocation of Christians only when it mirrors the love that Christ, the Bridegroom, gives to the Church, his Bride, and which the Church . . . seeks to give back to Christ in return.”

TOB 90:2

Key Themes and Terms

Analogy

Body

Sacrament, Sacramentality



Points for Discussion or Personal Reflection

VIDEO 8

Theology of the Body touches deep chords in the human heart. It may spark intense personal reactions—positive or negative—so it is important that a facilitator or group leader keep discussion focused on principles, not on persons.

VIDEO 9



- ✿ How is the “mutual submission” called for in Ephesians 5 a playing out in human form of the mystery of the Trinitarian relationships? To whom was Christ “subject”? What difference does that make in interpreting Paul today?
- ✿ In Ephesians 5, Paul draws implications for Christian marriage from Christ’s “giving himself for the Church” in the sincere gift of self that is the secret of human fulfillment. How does Paul in this passage inculcate the “ethos of the gift”? How does the passage from Ephesians “reveal—in a particular way—man to man himself and make his supreme vocation clear” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22:1)?
- ✿ Priests can be reluctant to preach on Ephesians 5. What could you say about this text that might encourage a hesitant preacher? If you were Paul, how would you suggest that twenty-first-century believers practice “mutual sub-mission in the fear of Christ” (or “out of reverence for Christ”)?

Analogy: A comparison in which something familiar is used to help explain or present something quite different. The two things being compared are alike in certain ways yet different in other ways. Analogy often involves highlighting a kind of parallel relationship.

Analogy is a tool that is not easy for contemporary society, so used to pithy and abbreviated communications, to use effectively. In social media, analogies often spawn a series of comments that focus exclusively on one or other of the images (or terms) instead of on the point the analogy was crafted to convey. On the other hand, to take an analogy too far, or to see it as a strict identification of the two images involved, is also to misunderstand it. (An example of this would be an interpretation of Ephesians 5 which focuses exclusively on the wife’s “submission to her husband,” making it a kind of absolute subjection as if truly to Christ himself and not within a comparison used to exhort both husbands and wives.)

Analogy is especially important in TOB 90–92, since Ephesians 5 provides *an analogy for a relationship of mutual self-giving*. For John Paul II, the analogy of marriage in Ephesians is “not only a comparison in the sense of a metaphor,



❁ How can you respond to those who would apply Paul's exhortation to "mutual submission" in a psychologically damaging way, or exclusively to women in relation to their husbands?

❁ As seen in both the Old Testament prophets and in the New Testament references to Christ as the "Bridegroom," how does the biblical analogy of marriage shed light on Christian marriage? What qualities of the "marriage" of Christ to his body, the Church are also the qualities of a Christian sacramental marriage? How does the natural marriage of man and woman (the "primordial sacrament") make "the great mystery" present to us and reveal in some way the grace it offers?

but a real *renewal* (or 're-creation,' that is, a new creation) of . . . the primordial sacrament" (TOB 98:8), revealing a *new ethos* and a new grace that "is assigned to (man's) heart, to his conscience, to his looks, and to his behavior" (TOB 100:7).



Real-Life Stories to Ponder

In commenting on the Letter to the Ephesians and its call to "submit to one another in the fear of Christ," Pope John Paul warns against "one-sided submission" on the part of the wife. What has happened to Jerry and Mary's "mutual submission" at this point? (The specific issues of contraception and sterilization will be addressed in video sessions ten and eleven, where Jerry and Mary's story will be continued.)

Jerry and Mary

The weekend of our son Jonathan's second birthday, my husband and I found out I was pregnant. We were so happy. At least I thought we were. We were building our family; we were together. We would soon welcome another little Lenaburg.

Jerry started talking to me about what we would do after this child was born. He thought I should get my tubes tied to prevent having more children. It would be easier than taking the Pill, which would also interfere with my nursing (not to mention that its infamous side effects were already taking a toll on my body).

Jerry was not raised Catholic and he was from a very small family. He did not picture himself the father of many children. In our marriage to date we hadn't agreed on how many children to have, but after one difficult pregnancy and birth, two miscarriages, and now a new pregnancy, Jerry began to press for an answer.

I was afraid it would be a deal breaker and he would leave. I was always afraid he would say, "That's it, lady. You are too much," and just go. He had all the power, at least I thought so. I was desperate to keep our family together and I did not want to rock the boat.⁴



For Personal Reflection

- ✿ “Submission” is not a popular word in democratic society. If this term creates something of an obstacle to you in receiving the message of the Letter to the Ephesians, how would you restate Paul’s call in a way that moves you to desire to make the kind of complete gift of self he is calling for?
- ✿ Jot down (or review any notes you may have taken during the video) points that challenge some of your assumptions about the biblical narrative, or about the human body and its meaning. Did anything either provoke a feeling of resistance in you or spark a fascination? Take these to prayer.

For Further Reading

The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (13)

The Joy of Love (220)

Additional Resources

Pitre, Brant. *Jesus the Bridegroom: The Greatest Love Story Ever Told*. New York, Random House, 2014.

CHAPTER TWO

The Dimension of Sign

Videos 10 and 11 (50 min.)
For prayer: Psalm 45
Song of Songs; Tobit (especially chapters 6–8)
TOB 103–117

“Love unleashes a special experience of the beautiful.”

TOB 108:6

“Man is unable to express this singular language of his personal existence and vocation without the body.”

TOB 104:7

Key Themes and Terms

“Prophetism” of the body

Redemption of eros

Friendship

Truth of the body

Language of the body




Points for Discussion or Personal Reflection

VIDEO 10

- ✿ When a man and a woman give themselves completely to each other they enter into a new state, “with a wholly different relation not just to each other but to the society, the community, the church at large. . . . A healthy society recognizes this in civil law, but even if it refuses to do so, it is still real” (Father Sprott). How does this understanding of the family built on natural marriage differ from other visions that are not grounded in the “language of the body”?
- ✿ The “language of the body” as described by Pope John Paul may seem exclusionary to some. How can we uphold all the truth of the body created male and female in God’s image, and at the same time show respect and acceptance toward people who are not at peace with the truth of their own bodies?
- ✿ The “prophetism” of the body seems to depend upon the twofold meaning of married love (that it is both unitive and fruitful). How is it possible for the “procreative meaning of the body” to be expressed by an infertile couple, or by a couple clearly past their childbearing years?
- ✿ In this chapter, Pope John Paul refers to three “kinds” or degrees of love: the love of friendship (*philia* in Greek), *eros* (which he describes as love that *moves toward* the beautiful), and *agape* (the love of charity). What is the difference between *eros* and concupiscence in the *Theology of the Body*? How does concupiscence threaten genuine *eros*?

VIDEO 11


- ✿ John Paul II’s treatment of the Song of Songs emphasizes that the woman of the Song is the “master of her own mystery,” fully aware of her dignity and freedom. She will not be pressured into submitting to the will of any man, but holds the key to the

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“The deepest words of the spirit—words of love, gift, and faithfulness—call for an appropriate ‘language of the body.’ And without this language, they cannot be fully expressed” (TOB 104:7).

The “Language of the Body” is “*the meaning of the body* [emphasis added] inscribed in it by the Creator and freely expressed by man and woman on the level of a freely given personal word. In the conjugal act, the person speaks an effective word of love and total gift through the body. . . . ‘Language of the body’ as used in TOB is thus a concept that essentially includes the conjugal act” (Michael Waldstein, TOB p. 682).

“It is the body itself that ‘speaks’; it speaks with its masculinity or femininity, it speaks with the mysterious language of the personal gift . . .” (TOB 104:4).

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beautiful “enclosed garden” which she is. How can this powerful awareness help young people who may unthinkingly engage in sending, receiving (and sometimes sharing) intimate photos, amid the pressures of a “hookup culture” as depicted in so much media? How can this positive vision of woman be inculcated in the young?

- ✿ Both the Song of Songs and the Book of Tobit highlight a young couple in love, and yet both use the language of “brother” and “sister” to describe the pair. What does this chaste language highlight in the relationship of the man and woman?
- ✿ While some of the most high profile presenters of the *Theology of the Body* are men, the audiences (including the live audience for Father Sprott’s conferences) seem to have an overwhelmingly feminine face. What do you find in the treatment of the Song of Songs that may help explain what women discover in *Theology of the Body*? What insights in the course so far are more appealing to men? What would help you to share the insights you receive with others in your family, neighborhood or workplace?
- ✿ The “language of the body” is most clearly revealed in the spousal relationship of man and woman, but not all people are called to the married life. How can families welcome and even facilitate the “sincere gift of self” that many single people long to offer?
- ✿ Can you think of a movie (or perhaps just a scene in a movie) in which the “language of the body” tells the “truth” about human love? What happens to the characters when the gift of self is overridden, thwarted, or withheld (in other words, when the “language of the body” is used for falsehood)?

Real-Life Stories to Ponder

Pope John Paul says that the body “speaks a ‘language’ of which it is not the author” (TOB 105:2) and that it “tells the truth through faithfulness and conjugal love” (TOB 104:8). What are the lies with which pornography traps people like Eduardo?

Pornography for women tends to be embedded in “steamy” novels. What are the pornographic lies in these novels? How do they undermine the truthful “language of the body”?

Eduardo

Eduardo first saw pornography at fourteen years old.⁵ It was (more or less) an accident. By the time he finished high school he was visiting porn sites several times a week. In college, things got even worse. Finally, he realized he was in over his head. He detested this sin, this compulsion, and he wanted to overcome it. He went to confession. But when the priest recommended he join a men’s group to help him with accountability, Eduardo wasn’t willing to go that far. After graduation, he met the girl that he would later marry. He assumed that marriage would make it easy to quit porn. Instead, he brought his porn habit into his



marriage, causing many problems. Reaching out to a friend, he learned about an accountability group. This time he accepted the challenge.

With patience and several years of counseling, Eduardo has found that he can be free from porn and free to truly love others as he was made to.⁶

For Personal Reflection

- ✿ Recall a time when you were privileged to witness a love “as strong as death.” How were *you* transformed by this “prophecy” communicated in the “language of the body”?
- ✿ Jot down (or review any notes you may have taken during the video) points that challenge some of your assumptions about the biblical narrative, or about the human body and its meaning. Did anything either provoke a feeling of resistance in you or spark a fascination? Take these to prayer.

For Further Reading

God Is Love (2–11)

Joy of Love (133–135, 253)

Additional Resources

May, William E. *Theology of the Body in Context: Genesis and Growth*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2010.

West, Christopher. *Heaven's Song: Sexual Love as it Was Meant to Be*. West Chester, PA: Ascension Press, 2008.

CHAPTER THREE

He Gave Them the Law of Life as Their Inheritance

Videos 12 and 13 (50 min. each)
For prayer: Psalm 19
Mt 5:27–28
TOB 118–132 (133, conclusion to the whole series)

“The language of the body’ should express . . . the truth of the sacrament.”

TOB 123:2



Key Themes and Terms

“In the fear of Christ”	Life according to the Spirit
“Prophetism” of the body	Natural law
Communion of persons	Person
Freedom of the gift	Purity
Inner truth	Sacramental
Language of the body	Self-mastery

Points for Discussion or Personal Reflection

VIDEO 12

- ✿ What were some of the concerns that led Pope Paul VI to issue an encyclical “On the Regulation of Human Birth”? What are some mistaken notions about *Humanae Vitae* and Catholic Church teachings on contraception that *Theology of the Body* addresses?

- ✿ In the Garden, God gave our first parents “dominion” over the earth. Paul VI observed, “Man is endeavoring to extend this control over every aspect of his own life” (*Humanae Vitae*, 2). What is the difference between using scientific knowledge to heal the ills that affect the human body and using medical science to thwart the natural, healthy functioning of the body?

- ✿ In *Humanae Vitae* (17), Paul VI foretold the social consequences of widespread contraception: increased infidelity; a general lowering of moral standards; decreased respect for women, seen “not as a beloved companion but as the instrument of the pleasure of the moment”; and coercive contraception by government policy. How have those



Natural Law

The title of the final chapter of *Man and Woman He Created Them* speaks of a “law of life.” Behind this expression lies a more than 2,000-year-old tradition of “natural law.” This term is older than Christianity, but the language is often misunderstood.

Despite its name, “natural law” is not “the law of nature” (for example, invariable biological processes or the “law” of gravity). In fact, “natural law” isn’t a set of laws at all—at least not in the juridic sense of rules imposed (and enforced) by an external authority. The Roman orator Cicero (106–143) spoke of “a true law, *right reason in accord with nature*, universal in application, unchanging and everlasting.”⁷ According to Saint Thomas Aquinas (who was building not only on foundations laid by ancient Greek and Roman philosophers but also on Christian thinkers like Augustine), natural



problems affected our society today? How might *Theology of the Body's* focus on the human person help address these problems at the root?

- ✿ Since 1968, medical science has learned a great deal about women's fertility. *Natural Family Planning* (NFP) allows couples to take advantage of this knowledge to both achieve and avoid pregnancy with surprising accuracy. Using a "personalist" understanding, what is the difference between deliberately making a conjugal act sterile and reserving the marital embrace for the naturally non-fertile weeks of a woman's cycle?
- ✿ Pope Paul VI called for a lifelong "education in chastity" beginning from the earliest years as long-term preparation for a healthy and happy marriage. What might this "education" include? How can a family offer this formation when its members live, play, study, and work in a hyper-sexualized society?
- ✿ In his letter *The Joy of Love*, Pope Francis states, "The upright consciences of spouses who have been generous in transmitting life may lead them, for sufficiently serious reasons, to limit the number of their children. . . ." (42). At the same time, he affirms the teachings of *Humanae Vitae*: "From the outset, love refuses every impulse to close in on itself; it is open to a fruitfulness that draws it beyond itself. Hence no genital act of husband and wife can refuse this meaning, even when for various reasons it may not always in fact beget a new life" (80). Does this surprise you? What do you make of this seeming contradiction?
- ✿ Dr. Angela Franks, author of *Contraception and Catholicism*, raises this discussion question:

law "is nothing other than *the light of the intellect planted in us by God*, by which we know what should be done and what should be avoided. God has given this light or law at the creation."⁸

Morality, then, is derived from *the truth that is in God himself*. The things God has created reach their fulfillment—or not—to the degree that they fulfill the purpose God has in mind for them. When we discover and live by the truth of natural law, we participate from the inside in God's creative wisdom.

It is a particular challenge that today's society recognizes far fewer examples of human nature or universal truth. This lack of a common foundation makes it very difficult to converse in the public square about issues of right and wrong, good or evil.

God's wisdom is embedded in the truth about the human person, a truth that shows the way to fulfillment, to a fully *human* happiness. Natural law is accessible to human reason (see Rom 2:14–15), even if it is not always apparent. Divine Revelation confirms natural law (for example, in the Ten Commandments) and invites us even higher: to "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:2).



“Support of contraception is usually framed in positive terms, about what we can achieve and gain from birth control. But the question that should make us think even more is the negative one: What are we fleeing from? In other words, what are we all so afraid of?” (*Contraception and Catholicism*, page 5)

VIDEO 13

- ✿ Pope John Paul II, like Paul VI before him, understood the depersonalizing effects of contraception. Can you think of any examples of this depersonalizing of the human body? In other words, how might we obscure the image of God in us by ways of acting that are contrary to the truth, as opposed to manifesting God’s image more brilliantly when we live in conformity with the divine life?
- ✿ How might living together or being “friends with benefits” alter a couple’s understanding, reverence, and even the experience of the conjugal act? How has this phenomenon (itself fueled by the ubiquity of contraception) affected marriage as a social institution? How might that impact the way engaged couples approach the Sacrament of Matrimony?
- ✿ How do the respective masculinity and femininity of the spouses in a sacramental marriage make them an “icon” of Christ and the Church? Why is the procreative meaning of sexuality a part of this icon?
- ✿ What does it mean that the “complete gift of self” has to be given *and received*, whole and entire? How might contraception eventually damage marital love?
- ✿ In cultures where women are still not fully respected as equal partners in a marriage, a wife who asks her husband to practice periodic abstinence for the sake of the family’s well-being may fear losing him completely. Some Catholic healthcare workers report that women have told them, “He will leave me for someone else.” What does this reveal about the couple’s relationship? How can Pope John Paul’s *Theology of the Body* offer this husband and wife a new and hope-filled vision?
- ✿ What are some means for growing in self-mastery and personal freedom, in view of an ever more complete gift of self in love? How can husband and wife support each other and grow in their love during days of abstinence?
- ✿ Thousands of couples today suffer from *infertility*. Some are desperate enough to do anything to have a child. How do invasive procedures like *in vitro* fertilization, use of “donor” eggs or sperm, surrogacy, etc. separate the unitive and procreative meanings of conjugal love and turn the human person into “an object of manipulation”? What kind of support do suffering couples need from the Church, parish, extended family, and neighbors? (See naprotechnology.com for a “whole person” approach to treating infertility that completely respects the spousal meaning of the body.)



Real-Life Stories to Ponder

Jerry and Mary both repent of having “used” each other. What does it mean that the “complete gift of self” has to be given and received, whole and entire? How does contraception or sterilization compromise that?

Jerry and Mary

Jerry: “Whenever life got challenging, she turned to food and shopping for solace, and I turned to sex. In addition to some dark corners of the Internet, I started to use my wife for my needs and not for the closeness and joy the marriage bed should bring to a couple. Our short-sighted and fearful decision to have her tubes tied came back to haunt us when Mary had to undergo a partial hysterectomy because of a tumor. After much prayer, angst, tears, and sorrow we had a major healing in our intimate life when we attended Christopher West’s seminar on *Theology of the Body* in 2009 as part of our formation as marriage mentors.”

Mary: “We realized that we had not trusted God with the plan for our family. We had *used each other* for sex. We sought counsel that weekend and we were asked about NFP. We shared with the priest that we could not have children anymore; he smiled and dug a little deeper. He suggested that in reparation for our choices we abstain during a certain part of the month as if we were still fertile, thereby ‘practicing’ NFP.

“That choice changed our lives, changed our marriage, for the better. It began the healing of our marriage bed. When we returned home, our pastor asked if we would be trained as NFP instructors and begin teaching the couples in our parish during their pre-Cana time. Talk about God’s plan. We never practiced NFP during our fertile years, but we now practice *and* teach NFP!

“God makes ALL things new. I am proof of this. My husband is proof of this. Our marriage is proof of this.”⁹

For Personal Reflection

- ✿ “How much do I trust that God’s plan will make me happy? . . . What is the world offering instead, and is it really such a great deal?” (*Contraception and Catholicism*, p. 5).
- ✿ Have you tended to see the teachings of the Church in areas like sexuality as “rules” or as “recommendations” to be taken under advisement? How does it change things for you to look at these teachings as an expression of the truth “that sets free” (see Jn 8:32)? Where do you need to grow in interior freedom?
- ✿ Jot down (or review any notes you may have taken during the video) points that challenge some of your assumptions about the biblical narrative, or about the human body and its meaning. Did anything either provoke a feeling of resistance in you or spark a fascination? Take these to prayer.



For Further Reading

Humanae Vitae (Encyclical Letter *On the Regulation of Human Birth* by Paul VI)
The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (11–15, 28–35)
Veritatis Splendor (12, 35–53)
The Joy of Love (147–149)

Additional Resources

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Eberstadt, Mary. *Adam and Eve After the Pill: Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012.

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Theology of the Body Resources

Adults

CHURCH DOCUMENTS

Starred titles are available at www.paulinestore.org.

The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (John Paul II)*

The Dignity and Vocation of Women (John Paul II)*

The Splendor of Truth (John Paul II)*

Letter to Families (John Paul II)

Letter to Women 1995 (John Paul II)

On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith)

God Is Love (Benedict XVI)*

The Joy of Love (Francis)*



BOOKS

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- Gaitley, Michael E. MIC. *The 'One Thing' is Three: How the Most Holy Trinity Explains Everything*. Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press, 2012.
- LeJeune, Marcel. *Cleansed: A Catholic Guide to Freedom from Porn*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2016.
- May, William E. *Theology of the Body in Context: Genesis and Growth*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2010.
- Percy, Anthony. *Theology of the Body Made Simple*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006.
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- Spinello, Richard A. *Understanding Love and Responsibility: A Companion to Karol Wojtyla's Classic Work*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2014.
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MARRIAGE PREP PROGRAM

Archdiocese of Boston, *Transformed in Love: Building Your Catholic Marriage*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2013.

Teens

Hajduk, David. *God's Plan for You: Life, Love, Marriage, and Sex: The Theology of the Body for Young People*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006.

Ages 4–7

Ashour, Monica. *Everybody Has Something to Give*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2015.

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For these and other materials related to Theology of the Body and the Sacrament of Matrimony, visit your nearest Pauline Book & Media Center or store.pauline.org.



Notes

1. Excerpted and adapted from passionateperseverance.blogspot.com with the permission of Mary Lenaburg.

2. Excerpted from *The Four Keys to Everlasting Love: How Your Catholic Marriage Can Bring You Joy for a Lifetime* by Karee Santos and Manuel P. Santos, © 2016. Used with the permission of the publisher, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556. www.avemariapress.com

3. Contributed by a Daughter of St. Paul.

4. Excerpted and adapted from passionateperseverance.blogspot.com with the permission of Mary Lenaburg.

5. As of 2008, more than 90 percent of adolescent boys reported being exposed to online pornography. See Sabina C., Wolak J., and Finkelhor D., “The Nature and Dynamics of Internet Pornography Exposure for Youth,” *Cyberpsychology & Behavior* 11(6): 691–693, 2008.

6. Anonymous account contributed by Marcel LeJeune, author of *Cleansed: A Catholic Guide to Freedom from Porn* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media), 2016; used with permission.

7. *The Commonwealth*, III, 22:11.

8. Preamble, “*Collationes in decem praeceptis*” (Conferences on the Ten Commandments, Google translation from Latin.)

9. Excerpted and adapted from passionateperseverance.blogspot.com with the permission of Mary Lenaburg.

About the Presenter

FATHER ROBERT SPROTT holds an MA in anthropology and theology as well as a PhD in linguistics. A Catholic priest and a Franciscan, he is currently assisting in the formation of the first group of permanent deacons for the diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay in the Canadian Arctic.

