



## "Male and Female He Created Them": Sex, Complementarity, and Chastity

In the prior summaries, a foundational approach was set forth that explained what it means to be human and how to act. Now we will focus on the gift of human sexuality. A person's sexual identity as a man or woman affects all aspects of life and is at the core of the question, "Who am I?"

In this session, your child will explore the meaning of sex and its relationship to marriage. This will include an explanation of the creation of man and woman, in which God willed their perfect equality as human persons. Man and woman were made "for each other." This doesn't mean that God left them incomplete, but that He created them with a beautiful masculine and feminine complementarity. He created them to experience a communion of persons, to help each other on their journey to Heaven.

### Sexual Desire is Holy

Sexual desire is holy because God designed it as part of human nature, meant to contribute to a fruitful union of life and love. Far from the two extreme approaches offered by a fallen world – indulgence or repression – this program teaches young people to understand properly the God-given gift of human sexuality, which must always be in harmony with the law of authentic love. That harmony depends on the development of the virtue of chastity, which rejects selfish gratification – the enemy of love. Chastity fosters the successful integration of sexuality within the person. It starts with purity of heart that guides the "language of the body," freeing it from contamination by lust.

### Expressing the Truth with the Body

As noted in a prior summary, the "language of the body" must correspond to the truth about various relationships and settings. We hug family members and friends, not strangers. We kiss our loved ones, not our teachers. We genuflect to Jesus present in the tabernacle, not to anyone else. And the most intimate expression of the body, sexual intercourse (indeed, all sexual activity), is reserved for marriage, because it "speaks" a language, saying, "I am committed to you alone for life, no matter what, and I am open to being a parent with you."

To engage in sexual activity before marriage is a lie; one is lying with the body rather than speaking the truth. The language of the body is proclaiming one message, but the reality of the relationship is not so. For your child, then, practicing abstinence is a way of being honest with one's body and preparing for marital chastity – the complete and lifelong mutual gift of spouses (see the true Story of Zack and Erin on page 46 in the *Parent's Guide*).

### Engage with your son/daughter

**Pray for them:** Dear Heavenly Father, You have given us our son/daughter. Help us to show [name of your child] who he/she truly is in You! May the foundational truths of the Theology of the Body guide us faithfully as a family. Amen.

- 1) "Language of the body" means our actions should reflect our heart, always in conformity with the way God has made us and the life to which he has called us. How would you explain this, using a simple, everyday example? How does it relate to love and the gift of sexuality?
- 2) What are ways that your age group experiences awkwardness or struggles to direct sexual desires in a good way?

Adapted from *Theology of the Body for Teens, Discovering God's Plan for Love and Life Middle School Edition: Parent's Guide*, Ascension Press, 2024.