



## What Is Love? Love Versus Use

The opposite of love is not hatred, but using others as objects. How often do we use family or friends, speaking with them only when we need them? Perhaps we even use God, only going to Him when we need something. Of course, we should receive help from God and others, but if the only time we interact with them is to *get* something, then we ought to take a hard look at ourselves. The guiding principle is that we are to *love people* and *use things*.

### Lust vs. Love

It is important that we differentiate between love and lust.

- Lust takes, Love gives
- Lust forces, Love receives
- Lust divides, Love bonds

After one of his Theology of the Body talks, the press reported Pope John Paul II's remark that a husband ought not to lust after his wife. One commentator reported, "If we can't lust after our own wives, who can we lust after?" The answer is, no one! We are never to use another person, especially our husband or wife, as an object. In other words, the *only* proper response to every person is love. From the criminal in prison to the baby in the womb, love is "the one thing necessary" (see Lk 10:42).

### Pornography, "Sexting," Fornication, and "How Far is Too Far?"

The following are a few highlights of the issues that your son/daughter is discussing in class.

- **Pornography:** Distorts, mocks, and hides the dignity of each person involved. It is a way of using people, the opposite of love. Science reveals that pornography actually alters the brain. It certainly damages the "heart."
- **"Sexting":** Immodest pictures, lustful messages, or sexual conversations on phones or computers denigrate God's design for true love. When people share "sexts," they present themselves as objects to be used, with emotional hurt as a consequence (see p. 56 in the *Parent Guide* regarding long-term painful consequences).
- **Fornication:** Young people may say, "How can this be wrong when we love each other?" The answer is this: God intends the gift of sexual intimacy exclusively for marriage. Otherwise, the body "tells a lie" by communicating a lifelong committed relationship that does not yet exist.
- **How far is too far?** The list on p. 57 includes: Touching private body parts on someone else; behaving in a way to tempt another to lust; doing something you would not do in the presence of your parents.

The discussion of these topics needs to emphasize the beauty of God's design more than fear of negative consequences (though these are real and not to be ignored). Forgiveness for sin through the Sacrament of Confession needs to be stressed. Christian counseling can be very helpful for those battling sexual addictions such as pornography. Internet/phone accountability programs like Covenant Eyes are a great help as well.

### 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) "Sexting" is such a violation because it takes that which is sacred and degrades it. What is a response to a "sext"?
- 2) Are you aware of how addictive pornography can be? Do you know friends who struggle with it?

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.