



YOU.

LIFE, LOVE, AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

PARENT INFORMATION SESSION

Introduction

If you are preparing to lead a group of young people through the **YOU** program, it is recommended that you conduct a **Parent Information Session**. The purpose is for you to:

- Educate your teens' parents about the Theology of the Body
- Introduce them to the program their teens will be studying
- Encourage them to take seriously their role as primary educators of their teens in matters of faith and morals
- Empower them to talk with their teens about the true meaning of their sexuality

The purpose of this **Leader's Guide** is to assist you in conducting a **Parent Information Session**. In this guide you will find:

- A checklist of things to consider prior to, during, and after the Parent Session
- Tips for helping parents create a culture of Theology of the Body in their homes
- Resources for further study
- Sample letters for the parents

Ideally, the same instructor(s) who will be teaching the **YOU** program would also facilitate the **Parent Information Session**. This will provide optimum continuity between the parents and their teens.

Preparing for the Parent Information Session

1. Schedule the Parent Information Session prior to teaching the program.
2. Use the sample parent letter found at the end of this document to announce your meeting.
3. Allow approximately ninety minutes for the session.
4. Consider offering refreshments.

5. Take attendance. Follow up with parents who do not attend. (More information on this topic is provided later in this guide.)
6. Prepare to show the **Parent Video**.
7. Prepare to distribute the **YOU Parent's Guide**, one per family. It is recommended that the facilitator becomes conversant with the content of the Parent's Guide prior to the Information Session.
8. Familiarize yourself with the **YOU Frequently Asked Questions** document, as it contains more than forty commonly-asked questions about the program. Also consult the **Guide to Sensitive Topics**. Although written for your instruction with the teens, some parents may have similar theological comments and/or questions. This document is a wonderful resource, offering helpful advice and excellent answers to the theological and moral questions that may arise during your parent meeting. Both documents are available as free downloads on ascensionpress.com.

During the Parent Information Session

1. As an introduction, explain that the purpose of the meeting is to learn about the exciting new program **YOU: Life, Love, and the Theology of the Body**.
2. Tell them that a **Parent Information Session** is offered as part of this program for a number of reasons:
 - First of all, the Church recognizes and acknowledges that parents are the primary educators of their children in matters of faith and morals. Because of the sexual content of the material, it is important for parents to understand the context in which sexuality is being presented. Again, parents are the first and primary educators of their children, especially in teaching the virtues of truth, faith, hope, and love in their relationships with God and others. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1632; Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 49; and the Pontifical Council for the Family document *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family*.)
 - In this session we want to encourage parents to engage their children in meaningful conversation regarding the program as it pertains to their lives. The **Parent's Guide** that they will receive later in the session will greatly help with this communication.
 - Tell the parents that they will view a video explaining the program and providing insight and tips for parental involvement.
3. Show the **Parent Video**.

4. After the video, distribute copies of the **Parent's Guide**, one per family. Point out the format of the booklet and select a session to show how the program content is summarized and that the last two pages of each session contain "Questions for Your Teens" followed by "Family Applications." Explain that these sections are meant to foster discussion of the material and strengthen family bonds.
5. Explain to the parents your overall plans, including the timing and format, for teaching the **YOU** program to their teens. Mention that their teens will be told that their parents have attended an information meeting and have received the **Parent's Guide**. (Be sure to tell your students!)

Following the Parent Information Session

- For those parents who did not attend the Information Session, send them a copy of the **Parent's Guide** with a letter of explanation. Use the sample letter at the end of this document, or a modified version of it.
- Some parents not attending the meeting may contact you with questions. Offer them an opportunity to watch the **Parent Video**.
- We recognize that although it is your responsibility to offer a **Parent Information Session**, it is ultimately the responsibility of the parents to attend the meeting and become informed about the program.

Additional Information in Your Outreach to Parents

Although the following information is found in the **Parent's Guide** and video, feel free to adapt and incorporate it into the **Parent Information Session** if you find it helpful.

- An additional reason why this **Parent Information Session** is being held is because so many Catholic parents have asked for help in talking to their kids about sex. They see their kids being inundated with advertising, music, and television programs that shout out the message, "There's something wrong with you if you don't have sex." Parents want the best for their kids—good health, quality education, and, in most cases, the hope of meeting the right spouse and sharing a lifelong marriage with children of their own. Even if their children are not called to the vocation of marriage but to a religious vocation, parents want them to have a proper understanding of the awesome gift of human sexuality.
- You are the first and best educators of your children. Yes, it is hard to find the right words to talk with your kids about sex, but it is not impossible. Your kids need you. Be there for them. The information contained in the resource material will help. But the most important part of the conversation is you. Don't be afraid to start the conversation—and remember to keep it going. Christ has promised that "the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32).

- Sex is part of God’s plan of spousal love for us. We shouldn’t be afraid of it. It is a gift to be treasured and shared. What a wonderful gift it will be for your children to know and experience sexual love as God intended

Video

The **Parent Video** addresses many of the following questions. However, should a question come up that you cannot answer, simply acknowledge that you do not know but will find out the answer and get back to them.

- Do you talk to your kids about sex?
- What do you say to them?
- What good does it do for parents to talk with their kids about sex?
- What does God have to do with sex?
- Why did God create us as male and female sexual beings?
- Why did God create sex?
- If God made us as sexual beings, what is wrong with having sex with someone we love, even if we aren’t married to each other?
- I had sex before marriage—so did most of my contemporaries. How can I expect my kids to behave any differently?

Additional Topics for Discussion with Parents

- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Find the times and places that best work for talking with your teen. Having dinner together as a family is a proven communication tool.
- **Set boundaries that are respected.** Make sure there are consequences when your boundaries are not respected. Curfew times, calling home when a child will be late, responsibility for school work and household chores, and rules about company at the house must be clearly understood and obeyed. When they are not, it is your responsibility as a parent to take the appropriate remedial action, firmly but fairly. Every child makes mistakes. A parent’s job is to ensure he or she learns from those mistakes and does not repeat them.
- **Rethink one-on-one dating in the early teen years.** The earlier girls begin dating, the higher the risk of engaging in premarital sex, having multiple sex partners, becoming pregnant, and having an abortion. This is especially true when the boyfriend is older. Encourage and provide occasions for interaction in larger groups.

- **Keep alcohol off-limits to your teens.** One in five sexually-active teens says they were using drugs or alcohol when they lost their virginity.
- **Live your faith as a family.** Teens in families who actively practice a religious faith are less likely to engage in premarital sex and other risky behaviors.

Letter to Parents

To be used to invite parents to the **YOU Parent Information Session**. It is recommended that you print on official letterhead of your school, parish, or organization. Please modify as needed.

[Date]

Dear Parents of [customize to fit your situation, e.g., “our youth ministry,” “our confirmation class,” “our tenth grade students”, etc.],

We are introducing an exciting new program called ***YOU: Life, Love, and the Theology of the Body***. This program is based on St. John Paul II’s landmark and revolutionary Theology of the Body, which offers a very positive message of the gift of sexuality as a good and essential part of love and life. It is our hope that this program will provide your teens with the knowledge and understanding they need concerning the meaning and purpose of their sexuality and of their very existence.

Recognizing parents as the primary educators of their children in matters of faith and morals, this program includes a rich parental component. To review the contents of **YOU** and view an explanatory video, we invite you to attend a **Parent Information Session** on [add date/time] to be held at [location].

The meeting will not only inform you of the beautiful message we will be sharing with your teen(s), but give you assistance and encourage you to discuss critical issues with them. At the information session, you will receive a **YOU Parent’s Guide**, a booklet that summarizes the program session by session, allowing you to follow along as your teen receives the instruction. The booklet also provides helpful questions and family applications to foster meaningful conversation at home.

Thank you for your time and interest in this important stage of your teenager’s spiritual development. We look forward to seeing you at the **Parent Information Session**.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Letter to Parents Who Did Not Attend the Information Session

[Date]

Dear Parents of [customize to fit your situation, e.g., “our youth ministry,” “our confirmation class,” “our tenth grade students”, etc.],

We are sorry you were unable to attend the **Parent Information Session** on [add date/time].

For your information and review, the enclosed booklet will inform you of the new and beautiful program we are introducing to your teen(s) called ***YOU: Life, Love, and the Theology of the Body***.

This program is based on St. John Paul II’s landmark and revolutionary Theology of the Body, which gives a very positive message of the gift of sexuality as a good and essential part of love and life. It is our hope that it will provide your teen(s) with the knowledge and understanding they need concerning the meaning and purpose of their sexuality and of their very existence.

Recognizing that parents are the primary educators of their children in matters of faith and morals, this program includes a parental component. We have enclosed a copy of the **YOU Parent’s Guide**, a booklet that summarizes the contents of the new program session by session. It will not only inform you of the beautiful message we will be sharing with your teen(s), but give you assistance and encourage you to discuss critical issues with them at home. Please note that the last two pages of each session provide questions and family applications to foster meaningful conversation at home.

We will begin teaching **YOU** on [start date]. We encourage you to follow along in the **Parent’s Guide**.

I encourage you to contact me should you have questions and to schedule a time to view the **Parent Video**, a thorough explanation of the entire program and how you can engage your son or daughter at home. Thank you for your time and interest in this important stage of your teenager’s spiritual development.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

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For More Information: AscensionPress.com or Call 1-800-376-0520