



## Frequently Asked Questions

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### 1. What is special about *Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School*?

*Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School* helps middle schoolers find answers to tough questions about their bodies, their identity, and their sexuality. *Envision* presents the core truths of Theology of the Body with three key questions:

- Who am I?
- Where am I going?
- How am I going to get there?

Authentic answers to these questions address many of the areas young people struggle with today, including body image, sexual identity, use of technology, pressure to date, sin and reconciliation, emotional vulnerability, bullying, weekend culture—and, of course, questions about sex and love. This program is designed to cut through the noise of today’s culture and inspire young people to *envision* a life of authentic freedom and love.

### 2. What is the Theology of the Body?

The Theology of the Body refers to the series of addresses given by St. John Paul II during his Wednesday audiences in Rome between September 1979 and November 1984. These 129 addresses were later compiled and published as a single work entitled *The Theology of the Body According to John Paul II* (now called *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*). The Theology of the Body covers such topics as the bodily dimension of the human person, the nature of human sexuality, the human need for communion, and the nature of marriage.

The Theology of the Body is an articulation of the faith that is intended to enrich the lives of all people. As commentator Emily Stimpson describes it,

The Theology of the Body is more than an exposition of the Church’s teachings on human sexuality. It is, in fact, the Catholic sacramental worldview, understood, structured, and articulated for a culture plagued by a diseased understanding of man. When properly understood and truly lived, that worldview has the power to transform the way men and women understand their bodies and their souls, their masculinity and femininity, their vocation in this life, and their destiny in the next. (*Franciscan Way*, Autumn 2007)

### 3. Who are the authors and presenters?

The *Envision* Student Workbook, Leader’s Guide, Parent’s Guide, and additional resources were authored by these Theology of the Body experts:

**BRIAN BUTLER** is the lead author and presenter of Ascension’s *YOU: Life, Love, and the Theology of the Body* as well as a presenter in the *Chosen* Confirmation program. He graduated from the University of New Orleans and has a master’s degree in theology from Notre Dame

Seminary School of Theology along with many years' experience in teaching, youth ministry, and campus ministry. He is the executive director of Echo Community, a nonprofit organization dedicated to chastity and vocation formation for teens and young adults.

**JASON EVERT** has traveled to six continents to bring the message of purity to millions of people for more than 25 years, including at World Youth Days in Australia, Spain, Poland, Panama, and Portugal. He has lectured at dozens of universities including Harvard, Princeton, and the U.S. Naval and Air Force Academies. He is a best-selling author of 20 books, including *Saint John Paul the Great*, *The Dating Blueprint*, and *Male, Female, Other?*. He is a frequent guest on radio programs, and his television appearances include MSNBC, Fox News, the BBC, and EWTN. Jason runs Chastity Project (Chastity.com), hosts the podcast *Lust Is Boring*, and leads an international alliance of young people who promote purity in more than forty countries.

**COLIN and AIMEE MacIVER** teach theology at St. Scholastica Academy in Covington, Louisiana, where they serve as campus minister and service director, respectively. Their decades of combined experience include youth ministry, Confirmation preparation, speaking, training, visual art, and music ministry. They have authored many popular Ascension offerings over the years, including most recently *Connected: Catholic Social Teaching for This Generation* and *Receiving Jesus: My Guide to the Mass*.

**Along with the authors named above, the videos for the *Envision* program feature the following presenters:**

**CHIKA ANYANWU** is a Catholic evangelist, former youth and young adult minister, and the author of *My Encounter: How I Met Jesus in Prayer*. She speaks internationally about the love and mercy of Jesus Christ and about prayer, Scripture, human dignity, and the difficult realities of faith and life. She has contributed to several Ascension programs, including *Connected: Catholic Social Teaching for This Generation* and *Venture: The Bible Timeline for High School*.

**TANNER KALINA** is the cofounder of the *Saints Alive* podcast, an alumnus of FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students), and a member of the National Eucharistic Congress team. He is a presenter on Ascension's *Encounter: The Bible Timeline for Middle School* series and has appeared in videos on Ascension Presents. He has also contributed to video projects for FOCUS, EWTN, CatholicMatch, and YDisciple.

**SR. MARY GRACE, SV**, grew up in Sydney, Australia, and graduated from the University of Notre Dame Australia. She worked in campus ministry before entering the Sisters of Life in 2013. Sr. Mary Grace then served vulnerable pregnant women in Toronto and now works for her community's evangelization mission, fostering a culture of life worldwide through mission trips, media, and online outreach. She also cohosts the Sisters of Life podcast, *Let Love*.

**MARI PABLO** grew up in southern Florida. She graduated from Franciscan University and holds a master's degree in theology from the Augustine Institute. She has contributed to several Ascension video series, including *Chosen: Your Journey to Confirmation*, *Connected: Catholic Social Teaching for This Generation*, and *Venture: The Bible Timeline for High School*, and to Ascension Presents. Mari has worked in youth ministry for more than 15 years and currently serves parishes and universities with the Evangelical Catholic.

#### 4. Who is *Envision* designed for?

*Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School* was specifically designed for students in grades six through eight. The presentations and materials speak to the students at that particular academic and emotional level about issues that are highly relevant to them and their life experiences. The program takes great care to treat difficult topics about human sexuality with great reverence, and it respects the vital role that parents play as the first and primary educators of their children.

#### 5. What is included in the *Envision* program?

In the *Envision* program, you will find a Student Workbook, Leader's Guide, Parent's Guide, and DVD set.

The **STUDENT WORKBOOK** provides everything students need to enter into and engage with the *Envision* program, reinforcing the video presentations. Each lesson in the workbook has the following features:

- Opening Prayer
- The Big Picture (lesson overview)
- Unpack the Quote (quotes from St. John Paul II)
- Story Starter
- “If You Ask Me” Discussion Questions
- The Core (main content teaching)
- 3 Video Presentations per Lesson:
  1. Introduction
  2. To the Core
  3. Witness and Wrap-Up
- Quick Quiz
- “Work It Out” Activities
- Got It? (takeaways to remember)

- Closing Prayer
- Vocabulary
- Additional Lesson Activities

The **LEADER'S GUIDE** contains everything needed to facilitate a study group and is an invaluable resource for each group leader or facilitator of an *Envision* study. It includes the contents of the *Envision* Student Workbook with detailed leader's notes, lesson steps to follow, case studies for practical application of concepts, discussion questions, additional activities, and a guide to tough topics.

## THE FIVE-STAGE LESSON STRUCTURE

All lessons in *Envision* follow the same five stages to help you present the content in a consistent, comprehensive way. *Envision* is also designed to be flexible, so you can adapt the individual lesson components to suit your group's needs..

- **ENTER.** We want Theology of the Body principles to become personal in your students' lives. Relationship-building activities help them become more open to the content. A consistent start to each lesson helps build the connections necessary for true engagement and learning. This is where icebreakers, prayer, and introductory activities come in. If your students' minds and hearts aren't open—if they aren't connected, interested, and feeling confident—it is far less likely that they will be able to receive and apply the lesson. Therefore, plan to begin each lesson by making real interpersonal connection. Take time to enter in, invite your students in, and set the tone.
- **ENGAGE.** As students take their first steps toward connecting the content to their own lives, this stage helps them understand what questions are being asked, how those questions are deeply relevant to their own experience, and how to relate them to their own stories. This movement is a subjective entry point into the objective truth presented in each lesson.
- **DISCOVER.** At this stage, we want to help students encounter and comprehend the core message. The "To the Core" video and the workbook invite students into the heart of the lesson. While continuing to appeal to experience, this is where the heart of the lesson (drawing from the Theology of the Body along with Scripture and Tradition) is presented with the specific audience in mind.
- **INTEGRATE.** We also want students to envision how the teachings of the Theology of the Body invite them to experience authentic love and happiness. This stage encourages personal application and even a conversion of heart. While ensuring comprehension,

this movement goes further into real-life application as your students search for identity, purpose, and belonging.

- **LAUNCH.** This stage is about sending students forth with hope and confidence to live out what they have learned. Have your group watch the final video, and close in prayer. You may also want to preview the upcoming content. Like the ENTER stage, this final movement of the lesson—the “sending forth” from lesson into life—is important, but it can be easy to gloss over. Consider using features of the program to develop a consistent rhythm for sending students out into the world at the end of each lesson.

## 6. How many lessons are in the program? What topics are covered?

The program is divided into eight lessons. Below are brief descriptions of each lesson.

**LESSON 1: WHO AM I? DISCOVERING MY IDENTITY, PURPOSE, AND DESTINY**—In Lesson One, your students will reflect on their lives up to this point and ask three critical questions: Who am I? Where am I going? and How am I going to get there? Students are invited to go deeper and consider that our identity, purpose, and destiny all flow from this simple truth: we were made for love, happiness, and heaven.

**LESSON 2: OUR STORY: GOD’S PLAN, SIN, AND A SAVIOR**—Lesson Two invites students to reflect on the reality that the world was not always filled with sin, sickness, and death. This session recalls the story of our origin, fall, redemption, and resurrection—and how each person participates in this story. Our ultimate desire is for God, but because of the Fall, Original Sin entered the scene. Students will come to understand that they have free will—that they can choose to do good or evil. Jesus sets us free so we can freely love and choose good. His example is the one we must follow.

**LESSON 3: ME, MYSELF, AND I: THE BODY AND THE SOUL**—In this lesson, your students will learn that the body makes the invisible soul of a person visible by what is conveyed through the body. God’s invisible love—in our invisible souls—is made visible by the loving actions we do with and through the body. The actions of the body are meant to speak the truth of God’s love.

**LESSON 4: HOW SHOULD I LIVE? VIRTUE AND VICE**—In this session, your students will learn about forming virtues. They will learn to differentiate between virtue and vice and understand the need for consistency and perseverance in the practice of virtue. Students will explore their own habits and identify steps they can take to reach not only future life goals but also the ultimate goal of heaven and union with God. Your class will be encouraged to explore and participate in the sacramental life of the Church, which will give them the tools to pursue eternal life with God in heaven.

### **LESSON 5: “MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM”: SEX, COMPLEMENTARITY, AND CHASTITY**

Lesson Five takes middle schoolers on the journey to the proper understanding of sexuality as it was designed and given to us by God. In this session, your students will consider how gender identity as a man or woman affects the question “Who am I?” They will also consider that there are two genders, male and female, and that these two genders are equal and complementary, bringing out the best in each other. The most dramatic form and purest expression of the language of the body that exists is sexual union. Through it, a husband and wife give their whole selves to each other through their bodies. Sex is a complete and total gift of self. Students will be introduced to the virtue of chastity as a positive virtue of sexual purity, not merely the practice of abstinence. Chastity gives us freedom in our relationships to truly love and fulfill our intended purpose.

**LESSON 6: WHAT IS LOVE? LOVE VERSUS USE**—Love is a sincere gift of self to the other. Love is a series of consistent choices, and it acts in the best interest of the one being loved. Lesson Six conveys this concept to students and helps them differentiate between real love and use. In this lesson, we explain how lust is a form of use—a vice that causes people to view others as objects for sexual gratification. In light of this truth, students will evaluate contemporary culture and specific behaviors (e.g., music, TV, internet use, pornography, “sexting,” premarital sex) and develop concrete actions to love people and use things.

**LESSON 7: VOCATION TO HOLINESS: GOD’S CALL, MY RESPONSE**—We often use the term *vocation* (which comes from the Latin word “to call”) exclusively in reference to the priesthood and religious life—but in Lesson Seven, your students will learn that there is a *universal* call to holiness. Whether God calls us to become a priest, nun, husband, wife, or otherwise, every person on the planet has a vocation to holiness. Students will learn that their vocation starts *now*. They are called to be holy in their daily life as a classmate, friend, sibling, and son or daughter. This session will explore the various vocations of marriage, consecrated life, and ordained life. Students will learn strategies for listening to the voice of God in our noisy, technology-saturated culture.

### **LESSON 8: THE ADVENTURE OF “YES”: LIVING OUT THE LANGUAGE OF THE BODY EVERY DAY**

This final lesson revisits and summarizes the ideas presented throughout the program. It reminds middle schoolers to trust in God’s plan for their futures, embrace their baptismal promises in a living relationship with Jesus Christ, and use their bodies to “speak” truth. Students will be encouraged to apply the core concepts of the Theology of the Body to every area of their lives, including difficult ones:

- Friends: bullying, gossip, peer pressure
- Family: broken or dysfunctional, lack of intimacy with parents, siblings
- World: the corporal works of mercy, social justice

## 7. How long is each lesson?

Lessons usually last 60 minutes, but we also include lesson plans for 45 minutes, 90 minutes, and 120 minutes in the Leader’s Guide to accommodate the needs of different groups. There is also a lesson plan structure that may be beneficial for Catholic school teachers.

Here is the suggested 60-minute lesson plan:

Lesson Plan for Eight 60-Minute Sessions			
<b>ENTER</b>	Step 1	Welcome and Opening Prayer Unpack the Quote	5 min.
	Step 2	Icebreaker (optional)	
	Step 3	The Big Picture	3 min.
<b>ENGAGE</b>	Step 4	Story Starter (optional) • If You Ask Me	
	Step 5	Video 1: Introduction • If You Ask Me	5 min.
<b>DISCOVER</b>	Step 6	Video 2: To the Core • Video Questions	10 min.
	Step 7	The Core • If You Ask Me	20 min.
	Step 8	Quick Quiz	2 min.
<b>INTEGRATE</b>	Step 9	Video 3: Witness and Wrap-Up	5 min.
	Step 10	Case Study (optional)	
	Step 11	Work It Out	5 min.
<b>LAUNCH</b>	Step 12	Got It? and Closing Prayer	5 min.
<b>Total Time:</b>			<b>60 min.</b>

## 8. How do I preview the *Envision* materials?

You can request a review pack of the *Envision* course for free at [AscensionPress.com/Envision](https://www.ascensionpress.com/envision).

### 9. Do I have to be an expert in the Theology of the Body to teach this course?

Prior knowledge of Theology of the Body is helpful but unnecessary. A lot of information and program resources are available for leaders to help you teach the material confidently every step of the way.

Ascension also offers a Theology of the Body Training Certification Course, a three-session training designed to empower parents, catechists, and anyone working with youth to form them in the truth of their identity, chastity, and vocation. This training is a completely online certification program that can be done at home. It can also serve as a great opportunity to gather as a team for visioning, discussion, and implementation. This course is a great way to maximize the efficacy of Theology of the Body studies for youth. For more information, visit [AscensionPress.com/products/theology-of-the-body-certification-course](https://AscensionPress.com/products/theology-of-the-body-certification-course).

### 10. Are there online resources available? Can I purchase digital-only access?

The entire *Envision* program is available on our digital platform at AscensionPress.com. Here, you can track students' progress, assign homework, administer quizzes, and more. Additionally, there are leader's resources, including a Guide to Sensitive Topics and a Parent Information Session Guide on the *Envision* homepage: [AscensionPress.com/Envision](https://AscensionPress.com/Envision).

If you're planning for a fully remote learning environment, the *Envision* Online Course can also be purchased separately.

### 11. Is *Envision* a sex ed program?

No, *Envision* is not a sex ed program but a human formation program. Rather than discussing human biology, the lessons explore how to holistically express ourselves as a man or a woman created in the image and likeness of God, so as to love as God has called us to love.

### 12. Does *Envision* cover explicit material?

Our curriculum is faithful to the language of John Paul II's original lectures. As such, it presents the Church's teachings on human sexuality using specific—but never overly explicit or graphic—language. Therefore, we believe that its content is appropriate for the maturity level of the average Catholic middle school student.

### 13. How does the *Envision* program address sensitive topics related to the Theology of the Body?

In addition to the main content videos, the *Envision* program provides five extra videos (called "Tough Topics" videos), which are not a part of the main content. These videos relate to particularly sensitive subjects addressed in the Theology of the Body:

- "Who You See in the Mirror" (on body image)

- “Your Body, Your Personality, and Your Identity” (on gender)
- “Your Attractions Don’t Define You” (on homosexuality/same-sex attraction)
- “Love and New Life” (on contraception)
- “Freedom from Harmful Habits” (on masturbation and pornography)

*Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School* presents Catholic teaching on these topics and others with great pastoral sensitivity. These videos are **not mentioned** in the Student Workbook or the student course online. This is so that leaders and parents together can make the best decisions about how to approach these topics with their groups. We know that maturity can vary greatly among middle schoolers, and we leave it to parents and leaders to tailor these presentations accordingly.

#### 14. Is the *Envision* program pastorally sensitive?

Absolutely. We realize that there are a number of difficult issues teens and preteens face in regard to love, sex, relationships, and marriage. We have made every effort to teach the truths of the Theology of the Body while keeping in mind the challenges young people face today.

#### 15. What is the role of parents in the program? How does the program help parents speak with their children about the Theology of the Body?

Parents are the first and primary educators of their children, and this is especially true when it comes to educating their children about matters of human sexuality. The comprehensive Parent’s Guide offers tips and suggestions for parents on how to talk to and engage their child in learning about the Theology of the Body.

The program also includes a parent’s session. The video presentation for parents gives helpful tips on how to speak with their children about issues of human sexuality and tips for guiding them through the *Envision* program.

#### 16. Is there a parent’s guide for *Envision*?

Yes. The Parent’s Guide serves as an excellent and informative overview of the *Envision* curriculum. It includes summaries of each of the eight chapters contained in the Student Workbook and a Q&A section with tips for parents on how to speak with their children about the Theology of the Body.

Visit [ascensionpress.com/envision](https://ascensionpress.com/envision) for more details.

