

Session Seven: Language of the Body

Objectives

1. Demonstrate ways the body can “speak” both truths and lies.
2. Describe how the language of the body extends beyond mere communication of emotions, to the body expressing the truth of our identities, our purpose for being, and the love of God.
3. Judge the truthfulness or lies of sexual behavior(s).
4. Analyze the language of the body as the language of love spoken within marriage.
5. Explain how premarital sex, adultery, pornography, and contraception all constitute lies in the language of the body.
6. Explain that the Holy Spirit is the Creator of life in the one-flesh marriage union.
7. In relation to homosexuality, distinguish between identity, attraction, and behavior.
8. Describe how the Church invites those who experience same-sex attraction to authentic love and human intimacy through chastity.
9. Recognize that Church is a loving mother and her teaching on homosexuality, gender theory, and related matters is motivated only by love, which always seeks the truth, even if the truth is difficult.
10. Recognize that in order to fully experience truthful language of our bodies, we must often be healed of distorted, painful misconceptions about the body’s value and purpose.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

On the Language of the Body: “[Man] is constituted in such a way from the ‘beginning’ that 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’ reread in the truth goes hand in hand with the discovery of the inner inviolability of the person” (TOB 110:8).

On Prophetism of the Body: The body tells the truth through faithfulness and conjugal love, and, when it commits ‘adultery’ it tells a lie, it commits a falsehood” (TOB 104:8).

“Man is person precisely because he is master of himself and has dominion over himself. Indeed, inasmuch as he is master over himself he can ‘give himself’ to another. And it is this dimension—the dimension of the freedom of the gift—that becomes essential and decisive for the “language of the body” in which man and woman express themselves reciprocally in conjugal union” (TOB 123:5).

On the Language of the Body and Marriage: “The sign of the sacrament of Marriage is constituted by the fact that the words spoken by the new spouses take up again the same ‘language of the body’ as at the ‘beginning’ and, at any rate, give it a concrete and unrepeatable expression. They give it an intentional expression on the level of intellect and will, of consciousness and the heart. The words, ‘I take you as my wife/ as my husband,’ bear within themselves precisely that perennial and ever unique and unrepeatable ‘language of the body’” (TOB 103:5).

“We can say that the essential element for marriage as a sacrament is the ‘language of the body’ reread in the truth” (TOB 104:9).

On Conjugal Chastity: “If conjugal chastity (and chastity in general) manifests itself at first as an ability to resist the concupiscence of the flesh, it subsequently reveals itself as a singular ability to perceive, love, and realize those meanings of the ‘language of the body’ that remain completely unknown to concupiscence itself” (TOB 128:3).

On Gender: Every human being is by nature a sexual being, and belongs from birth to one of the two sexes” (*Love and Responsibility*, 47).

On Sexual Difference as Fundamental Fact: “The fundamental fact of this existence of man in every stage of history is that God ‘created them male and female’; in fact, he always creates them in this way, and they are always such” (TOB 18:4).

On the Importance of the Meaning of the Body: “The understanding of the fundamental meanings contained [here] ... such as the spousal meaning of the body ... is important and indispensable for knowing who man is and who he ought to be, and therefore how he should shape his own activity. It is something essential and important for the future of human ethos” (TOB 18:4).

On the Depth of Sexual Difference: “Woman’s constitution differs from that of man; in fact, we know today that it is different even in the deepest bio-physiological determinants. The difference is shown only in a limited measure on the outside, in the build and form of her body” (TOB 21:3).

On the Body as a Task: “The Creator has assigned the body to man as a task, the body in its masculinity and femininity ... he assigned to him in some way his own humanity as a task, that is, the dignity of the person ... While setting before man the requirements that correspond to the tasks entrusted to him, the Creator at the same time points out to man—male and female—the ways that lead to accepting them and carrying them out” (TOB 59:2).

On Difficulty with the Body: “Concupiscence brings with it an almost constitutive difficulty in identifying oneself with one’s own body” (TOB 29:4).

Leader's Notes

Prayer for Today

Pray today for your teens to come to understand the power they hold in their bodies and the responsibility that comes with that God-given power. Also pray for their humility, as this is needed if one is to discern the new language we are called to speak with our bodies. We suggest praying your own private and unscripted prayer to Jesus, the God who took on flesh and taught us so much through his own language of the body. May he help you as you reach out to your students and witness to the truth with your own body.

Quick Sign Language of the Body Activity

Break your teens into groups of four or five. Have them brainstorm different kinds of non-vulgar forms of body language (e.g., nods, smiles, sign language, high fives, hugs, pats on the back, kisses, hand holding, handshakes, thumbs up, winking, and opening a door for someone). Whichever group can come up with the most examples within one minute gets a prize. You can use this as a small way to back up your teaching that says there are many ways to speak the truth with our bodies that are not sexual. Encourage your teens to be consistent and truthful with the way they speak the language of the body, even when it is not sexual.

College Kids Say the Darndest Things

For thought provoking discussion on the issues of sexual difference, gender rights, and blurring the lines between the sexes, consider sharing the video on YouTube called “College Kids Say the Darndest Things: On Identity” by the Family Policy Institute of Washington. The host of this 4-minute video proposes to college students that he is a 6 foot 5 inch Chinese woman, when, in reality, he is a 5 foot 9 inch white man. The responses are confounding, and the piece is done in a nonjudgmental way. The video is an excellent discussion enhancer, based in reason rather than Church teaching, helping make the point that there is a fundamental difference between male and female. As John Paul II noted, masculinity and femininity constitute the “fundamental fact of existence” (TOB 18:4).

With the best of intentions, some people fall into the illusion of radical autonomy that leads not to freedom of “self-creation,” but rather, to a stripping of human dignity. This is what Pope Benedict XVI referred to in 2012 when he wrote:

When the freedom to be creative becomes the freedom to create oneself, then necessarily the Maker himself is denied and ultimately man too is stripped of his dignity as a creature of God, as the image of God at the core of his being. The defense of the family is about man himself. And it becomes clear that when God is denied, human dignity also disappears. Whoever defends God is defending man.¹

The Intrinsic Meaning of Sex

The primary definition of sex is the reality of being male and female, yet sex has intrinsic meaning both as a “noun” and as a “verb.” This means that there is meaning inherently connected to it that is not changed by our own intentions, thoughts, or even ignorance. Some gestures vary in their meaning from culture to culture and from situation to situation. However, the act of sexual intercourse has a meaning that does

not change, regardless of who we are and where we are, because God inscribed that meaning into it. The sexual act speaks a language of totality and is meant to say in a bodily way that “I hold nothing back from you, and I desire to give you my whole self.” This is why the act belongs in a marriage, where this promise has already been made verbally and then is “spoken” through the body. For example, this is why John Paul II noted toward the end of his reflections that “when the conjugal act is deprived of its inner truth because it is deprived [via contraception, willingly by the spouses] of its procreative capacity, it also ceases to be an act of love” (TOB 123:6).

Contraception Versus NFP

Many think of Natural Family Planning (NFP) as “Catholic contraception.” However, there are fundamental differences between the “acts.” When a couple introduces contraception into the marital act, they are choosing to remove an integral aspect of the act itself (the procreative aspect). On the other hand, when a couple discerns, for serious reasons, that it is not a good time to have another child and use NFP, they are simply choosing not to act and therefore preserve the act’s integrity and true meaning. The Church does not say that married couples must have as many children as possible, but rather invites parents to exercise responsible parenthood.

The Second Vatican Council noted that for parents, this takes “common counsel and effort. Let them thoughtfully take into account both their own welfare and that of their children, those already born and those which the future may bring. For this accounting they need to reckon with both the material and the spiritual conditions of the times as well as of their state in life. Finally, they should consult the interests of the family group, of temporal society, and of the Church herself.”²

Therefore, the *Catechism* states that “for just reasons, spouses may wish to space births of their children. It is their duty to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood” (CCC 2368).

John Paul II added, “Decisions about the number of children and the sacrifices to be made for them must not be taken only with a view to adding to comfort and preserving a peaceful existence. Reflecting upon this matter before God, with the graces drawn from the Sacrament, and guided by the teaching of the Church, parents will remind themselves that it is certainly less serious to deny their children certain comforts or material advantages than to deprive them of the presence of brothers and sisters, who could help them to grow in humanity and to realize the beauty of life at all its ages and in all its variety.”³

Case Studies

Refer to the case studies in Leader’s Appendix A to spark a guided discussion on the topics in this session.

Difficult Questions

Be prepared for students to ask questions on the topics covered here in the text.

Masturbation: Masturbation is a key problem for many teenagers today (both male and female). Many are addicted to pornography, and, in turn, are often addicted to masturbation. We encourage you to review the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (see CCC 2352) and charitably point out the selfish nature of the act of masturbation. Masturbation trains the person to be selfish with their sexuality (and, most likely, in other areas of life). Such selfishness is the direct antithesis of the mutual, self-giving purpose of our sexuality.

It may be a helpful exercise to write the three examples in the last paragraph on the board (pornography, masturbation, contraception) and ask your students to point out their similarities. First, all three are sterile. Next, selfishness and a lack of self-gift should quickly come into the discussion, at which point you can again explain that generous people do not buy gifts for others and then use them for themselves. Gifts are meant to be given to another. Our sexuality is a gift from God.

For me the real evil of masturbation would be that it takes an appetite which, in lawful use, leads the individual out of himself to complete (and correct) his own personality in that of another (and finally in children and even grandchildren) and turns it back; sends the man back into the prison of himself, there to keep a harem of imaginary brides. And this harem, once admitted, works against his ever getting out and really uniting with a real woman. For the harem is always accessible, always subservient, calls for no sacrifices or adjustments, and can be endowed with erotic and psychological attractions which no woman can rival. Among those shadowy brides he is always adored, always the perfect lover; no demand is made on his unselfishness, no mortification ever imposed on his vanity. In the end, they become merely the medium through which he increasingly adores himself ... After all, almost the main work of life is to come out of our selves, out of the little dark prison we are all born in. Masturbation is to be avoided as all things are to be avoided which retard this process. The danger is that of coming to love the prison.

– Personal letter from C.S. Lewis to Keith Masson
(Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis, Volume 3)

Homosexuality: To go deeper in exploration of the topic of homosexuality, you may want to have your students read the “Digging Deeper” section in this session before fielding questions or launching into discussion.

To start, be clear that the genesis of same-sex attraction remains largely unexplained. However, no matter what the root, the call to chastity is the same for all unmarried people, a big part of which includes abstinence. It is critical to help our students understand the basic difference between homosexual acts and “deep-seated homosexual tendencies” (CCC 2358). The Church defines homosexual acts as “acts of grave depravity” that “do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity” (CCC 2357) and are always unacceptable. But the Church acknowledges that same-sex attraction is not freely chosen, and that although it is not in line with God’s original plan, the attraction itself is not sinful.

It is imperative that, as a catechist, you stress our call to love those who experience same-sex attraction, not to condemn them. In a society that is often split between the “anything is acceptable” and “homosexuals are going to hell” schools of thought, we Catholics are called to speak the truth in love, acknowledging that people who experience same-sex attraction are welcome in our Church and called to chastity—as

are all people. Those who carry this cross and are faithfully living a life of chastity in spite of the powerful pressures against them in the world are modern-day heroes. Many do not flaunt their virtue but carry their crosses quietly. Those experiencing such struggles need authentic friendship through which to live out the challenging but rewarding call to chastity.

Same-Sex “Marriage”: The Theology of the Body offers us an anthropology (a general study of humanity) that is founded upon the idea that a man’s body does not make sense without a woman’s body, and vice versa. Moving from this simple recognition to the realization of marriage as a sign of the communion between God and man—between Christ and the Church—should help us see why same-sex “marriage” is simply not possible. The one-flesh union between man and woman is the defining act of marriage. Two men or two women engaging in some form of sexual activity are not capable of engaging in the marital act because of the design of their bodies. Your students are likely to have questions in this area, and we encourage you to respond to these difficult questions.

Classic Clips

The Passion of the Christ: (1) *The Crucifixion:* The visual depiction of Christ on the Cross, making the ultimate sign of love with his body. Show the segment that falls between 1:35:06 and 1:43:13. (Note: Before showing this clip to students, we strongly recommend that you get written parental permission. This is a very violent scene.) (2) *Jesus’s Betrayal:* This is the scene where Judas betrays Jesus through using one of the most recognized signs of love: a kiss. Show the segment that falls between 9:14 and 11:14. (3) *Jesus Falls:* This is the scene in which Mary has the flashback of Jesus falling down as a boy. Without words, we see her run to him, pick him up, and hold him. The language of the body here is one of profound love of a mother for her son. Show the segment between 1:14:50 and 1:19:19.

The Incredibles: First, show the segment that falls between 15:39 and 16:15. This is the scene in which Violet acts self-consciously, hides herself in her hair, and then makes her head disappear when a guy looks at her. Then show the segment that falls between 1:14:50 and 1:15:40, where Violet has progressed in confidence, symbolized by wearing her hair half-way across her face, but still hiding part of herself. Finally, show the segment that falls between 1:45:33 and 1:46:22, where, after achieving success as part of a family and team effort, Violet—who always looked down and slumped her shoulders in depression and discomfort—finally expresses herself differently with confidence. She shows a new openness to life with her hair pulled away from her face and then confidently plans a date with the guy she earlier avoided.

Pastoral Tip

A Word About Language

Whenever speaking about those who experience same-sex attraction or gender confusion, porn addiction, or any other sexual struggles, be careful not to use language that ostracizes those who struggle in such ways. Using phrases like “those porn addicts” or “the transgenders” drives a wedge between “us” and “them.” In fact, we must recognize that we all struggle with various degrees of sexual confusion, impurity, and sin. To be pastorally sensitive is to remember that there is no “us” and “them,” but rather one body with many members. When one member of the body suffers, we all do.

Session Seven Structure Options

120 MINUTE SESSION

START HERE	
Icebreaker	5 min
Opening Prayer	2 min
Verbal Review (optional review)	3 min
Read: "Dive In"	3 min
Discussion Questions: Large-group discussion following the "Dive In"	10 min
Read: "Bridging the Gap"	3 min
Watch Videos: Intro + 7.1: Language of the Body (12:02) + (3*) 7.2: Homosexuality (12:20) + (3) 7.3: The Body Reveals Our Identity (6:04) + (3) 7.4: Overcoming Lies About the Body (10:48) + (3) *Please allow 3 min after each segment for students to answer the "Video Discussion Questions" on their own.	54 min
Small-Group Discussion: Choose "Video Discussion Questions" for the students to discuss in their small groups.	10 min
MAIN CONTENT	
Teach: Teach the "To the Core" section where the key points are found, allowing teens to ask relevant questions along the way.	20 min
Dig Deep: Have the teens read (aloud or silently) "Digging Deeper."	8 min
Closing Prayer	2 min
AT HOME: Have teens read the practical "Live It Out."	
Total Time:	120 min

90 MINUTE SESSION

START HERE	
Opening Prayer	2 min
Read: "Dive In"	3 min
Discussion Questions: Large-group discussion following the "Dive In"	7 min
Read: "Bridging the Gap"	2 min
Watch Videos: Intro + 7.1: Language of the Body (12:02) + (3*) 7.2: Homosexuality (12:20) + (3) 7.3: The Body Reveals Our Identity (6:04) + (3) 7.4: Overcoming Lies About the Body (10:48) + (3) *Please allow 3 min after each segment for students to answer the "Video Discussion Questions" on their own.	54 min
Small-Group Discussion: Choose "Video Discussion Questions" for the students to discuss in their small groups.	5 min
MAIN CONTENT	
Teach: Teach the "To the Core" section where the key points are found, allowing teens to ask relevant questions along the way.	10 min
Dig Deep: Have the teens read (aloud or silently) "Digging Deeper."	5 min
Closing Prayer	2 min
AT HOME: Have teens read the practical "Live It Out."	
Total Time:	90 min

75 MINUTE SESSION

START HERE	
Opening Prayer	2 min
Read: "Dive In"	3 min
Discussion Questions: Large-group discussion following the "Dive In"	6 min
Read: "Bridging the Gap"	2 min
Watch Videos: Intro + 7.1: Language of the Body (12:02) + (2*) 7.2: Homosexuality (12:20) + (2) 7.3: The Body Reveals Our Identity (6:04) + (2) 7.4: Overcoming Lies About the Body (10:48) + (2) *Please allow 2 min after each segment for students to answer the "Video Discussion Questions" on their own.	50 min
MAIN CONTENT	
Teach: Teach the "To the Core" section where the key points are found, allowing teens to ask relevant questions along the way.	10 min
Closing Prayer	2 min
AT HOME: Have teens read "Live It Out" and "Digging Deeper."	
Total Time:	75

Icebreaker

Body-Spelling Charades

This game is most exciting when done as a competition between two teams, but it can certainly be effective if done with only one group. It also works best in a room with a lot of space; moving desks around probably will be necessary.

Break your group into two equal teams, with about eight to twelve teens each. If available, line up chairs on each side of the room with plenty of floor space in the middle. Have a few members from each team stand on the chairs (two or three for each side, looking into the middle). The remaining members of each team should stand in the middle, facing their teammates who are on the chairs. Upon your signal, those standing on chairs should either leave the room or cover their ears as you give the direction to the rest of their team. You say a word, such as “lake,” and the teams need to try to use their bodies to spell out the word “lake” on the floor. The people standing on the chairs must “read” (or guess) as quickly as they can the word their teammates are trying to spell.

To make the game easier, assign each team a designated leader to help coordinate the “body-spelling” effort. To make the game harder, do not allow the “spellers” to say any letters out loud, and make it so that each team is only allowed one guess (this will make them concentrate on figuring it out, rather than just yelling out guesses). Instead, mandate that their communication to one another be only with gestures. You can complicate things even more by making them do all capital letters, all lowercase, or capitalizing the first letter of each word. Start the game with easy words and progress to harder and longer ones, depending on how many people are on each team. The fewer people on each team, the shorter the words need to be for this game to work. Here are a few suggestions of some terms and related words found in this program.

Fall	Image	Shame
Fruit	Love	Original
Sin	Free	Chastity
Pope	Garden	Freedom
Hope	Total	Innocence
Body	Purity	Eschatological (for extra credit!)

Here is another twist to this game. Get the teams to create objects instead of words (e.g., stop sign, football, sunglasses, chalice, pretzel, the Chi-Rho symbol, and so on). Later on in the session, you can make the connection to the material by referring back to this “language of the body,” reminding students again in a tangible way that the body shows forth the message or truth of the person.

1. *Answer:* Free, total, faithful, and fruitful.
2. *Answer:* Through all of married life lived in true, faithful service and especially through the marital act of sexual relations.
3. *Answer:* We can fill ourselves with God's love, receiving all he wants to give us.
4. *Answer:* Jesus' death on the Cross was free because no one made him do it; it was total because he gave everything; it was faithful in that he stayed the course until the end; and it was fruitful because it brought us life. Mary's offering herself to God was free because no one made her say "yes"; it was total because she gave all she had to give; it was faithful because she never abandoned her Son, even when he was on the Cross; and it was fruitful because her "yes" brought God to earth.

Session Seven

LANGUAGE OF THE BODY

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader or Reader #1: Read Ephesians 4:22-25 (NAB).

"Put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth. Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, for we are members one of another."

Leader or Reader #2: Lord Jesus, help us to resist all temptations that keep us from speaking the whole truth with our mouths, minds, hearts, and bodies. Help us to be honest in word and deed, with pure hearts that follow after you. Amen.



Welcome, Icebreaker, and Opening Prayer

Welcome the teens, lead them through the icebreaker, then pray the Scripture verse and prayer together to set the tone for the session.

Verbal Review of

Session 6

1.

Name the four parts of self-donating love found within the wedding promises at the altar.

2.

How do a husband and wife continually renew their wedding vows?

3.

How can you prepare to give yourself as a gift to another?

4.

How did Jesus and Mary both image the free, total, faithful, and fruitful love of God?

5.

What is *Humanae Vitae*, and why is it so important?

5. Answer: Latin for “Of Human Life,” *Humanae Vitae* is the encyclical published in 1968 by Pope Paul VI which articulated Church teaching on faithful regulation of fertility and taught the inseparable unitive and procreative dimensions of the sexual act. John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* offers an extended set of reflections that would offer a “total vision of man” necessary to more fully understand the dignity of man, the call to love, and responsibility necessary within marriage. John Paul II said the questions arising from *Humanae Vitae* permeate the sum total of all his reflections within the *Theology of the Body* (TOB 129).

119

STEP
2

Review

Do a verbal review of the previous session’s material.



It has been said that when an Inuit Native American becomes aware of the presence of a wolf in his territory, he uses a creative tactic to protect his herds and family. Rather than face the wolf, the hunter uses the animal's own appetite to bring it down. He begins by slaughtering one of his smaller goats and pouring its blood over the blade of a knife. The weapon is left to freeze in the arctic temperatures, and once the first coating of blood is set, more blood is placed on the knife. This process is repeated until the entire blade is covered with frozen blood.

Before nightfall, the Eskimo hikes outside of his property and buries the handle of the knife in the ground, leaving the blade protruding from the snow. Since wolves have an exceptional sense of smell, it doesn't take long for one to track the scent, find the knife, and begin cautiously licking the frozen blood. As the taste excites the animal, it begins to lick more aggressively.

Before long, parts of the blade are exposed and the wolf's tongue is nicked. But since its tongue has been numbed by the icy blood, the animal is

unaware of the damage being caused. As the blood of the goat is cleaned off the blade, it is replaced with the warmer blood of the wolf. In an excited frenzy at the taste of the fresh blood, the animal licks all the more ravenously until it becomes faint. Within hours, the wolf will die of blood loss.

This trap resembles the allure of sexual sin. A person experiences satisfaction without initially seeing the consequences. We feel like we are getting away with doing a particular act—only for a while, that is. The pleasure offers us an escape from loneliness and a brief relief from the emptiness we often feel. But before we realize it, the damage has been done to us. This is similar to the allure of sin: It promises us everything and gives us little or nothing in return. In fact, the whole power of temptation rests on the deceptive promise that living for ourselves will give us more joy than if we live for God.

The challenge we face as Christians is that we need to unmask the lies given to us by the modern culture and then have the courage to choose what will actually satisfy us.

120 / YOU.

STEP 3 Dive In

Read the "Dive In" aloud, have a teen read it aloud, or have the group read it silently. Then, lead everyone through the discussion questions.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of a time when you were deceived by an empty promise?
2. Can you think of a time when you were deceived by another person's language of the body? What did you feel like after you realized you had been deceived? Have you ever done this to someone else?
3. What would motivate a person to tell a lie with his or her body?
4. Describe a time when someone told you the truth with the language of his or her body. How did this make you feel?
5. Why do you think some people believe that lies with the body are not the same as verbal lies?
6. How much of your time do you spend learning the language of the body from TV shows and online videos?
7. Thirty years ago, the average adolescent in the United States saw 14,000 sexual references on TV each year. Do you think television has gotten more wholesome since then? Why, or why not?
8. Is the language of the body we see portrayed on TV and in the movies generally speaking truth or lies?



BRIDGING THE GAP

There are so many ways to grab someone's attention these days, but none is more popular than splashing sexual images, lyrics, innuendos, jokes, stories, or actions into our lives. We have become conditioned by all of these messages showing the "language of sexuality" and may no longer question their truth. As the hungry

wolf was tricked into thinking the bloody knife would satisfy his hunger, we are often tricked into thinking our deepest desires will be met by sexual pleasure. One of the keys to satisfying our deepest desires is to learn the language of the body and learn to "speak it" well.

Did You Know?

Should a married couple have a serious reason to delay pregnancy for a period of time, the husband and wife can use what is called Natural Family Planning. NFP is a method of self-observation of a woman's body that reveals which days of the month she is fertile and which ones she is not. Through observing a variety of physiological signs, a couple can determine accurately which days of the month, if they engage in the marital act, they can expect to be expecting. Many people confuse NFP with the "rhythm" or "calendar" methods, which are only moderately effective methods used by couples in the past century. According to the *British Medical Journal* and other highly respected entities, NFP is highly effective, reaching **98% and 99% effectiveness** in several independent studies. For example, in a *British Medical Journal* study, nearly 20,000 impoverished women in India (using NFP) had a pregnancy rate "approaching zero."¹ The point is not to find a "Catholic" way to avoid having children. But if serious reasons to postpone pregnancy arise in married life, there is a moral, effective, and safe alternative to contraception.

122 / YOU.

STEP
4

Bridging the Gap

The "Bridging the Gap" should be read before moving on to the video presentations.



VIDEO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

7.1 Language of the Body

1. What do you think is the difference between body language and the language of the body?

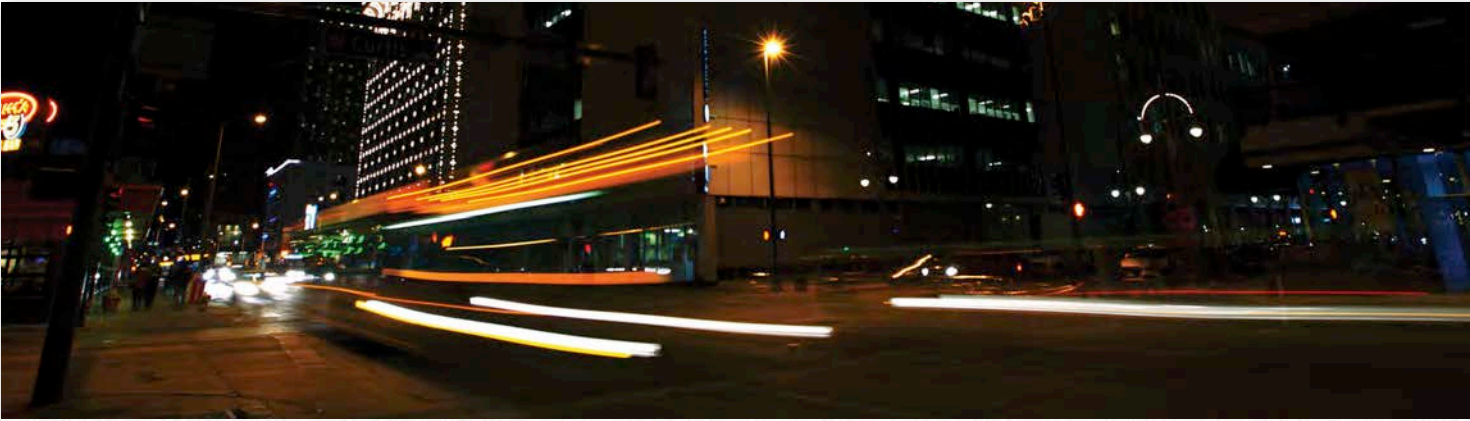
2. What are three ways that a person can speak the truth or a lie through the language of the body? What are some of the effects of these lies that you see among your peers and in our culture?

3. Have you ever been told something that you believed with all of your heart was true, but later found out it was a lie? What was this experience like, and how did it make you feel?

STEP
5

Video Presentation, Journaling, and Small-Group Discussion

Play the video presentations for this session, beginning with segment one. At the end of each segment, give the students 2 to 3 minutes to answer the questions in their workbooks on their own before moving on to the next segment. At the end of the last segment, the students should be placed in small groups to discuss their answers to the “Video Discussion Questions.”

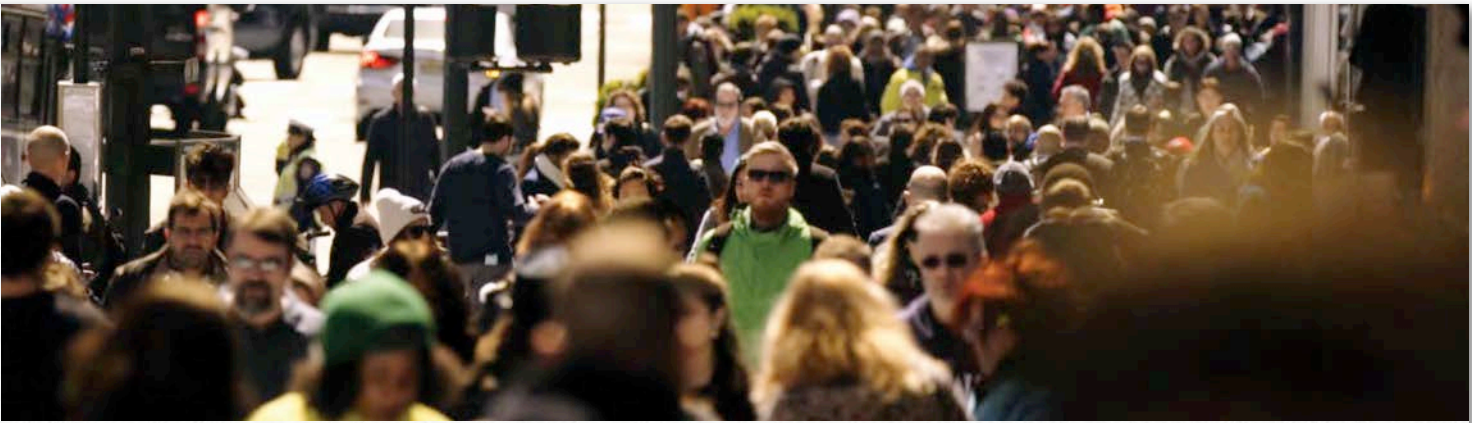


7.2 Homosexuality

1. Why do you think the world tends to think that chastity isn't a realistic lifestyle for people who experience same-sex attraction? How is it that abstinence can be an expression of love?

2. Why is it important that we define our identity by something deeper than our sexual attractions? How can we root ourselves every day in the truth that we are beloved sons and daughters of God the Father?

3. How can we accompany, encourage, and speak truth to our friends who may experience same-sex attraction? What would make it easier for people to receive the encouragement and truth spoken by the Church on this issue?



7.3 The Body Reveals Our Identity

1. The Church teaches that the body reveals a person's identity because it makes the invisible reality of the person visible. What do you think about Fr. Mike's statement that he knows he's a man not because he feels like one, but because he has a man's body?

2. In what ways can people feel an alienation from the truth about their bodies? How does the media contribute to this alienation? How can others best love them by helping them understand the truth of their goodness as men and women?

3. In what ways do you think that unfair gender stereotypes have led people to feel like less of a woman or less of a man? Do you feel that the culture pressures you to question your own gender and also your sexuality?

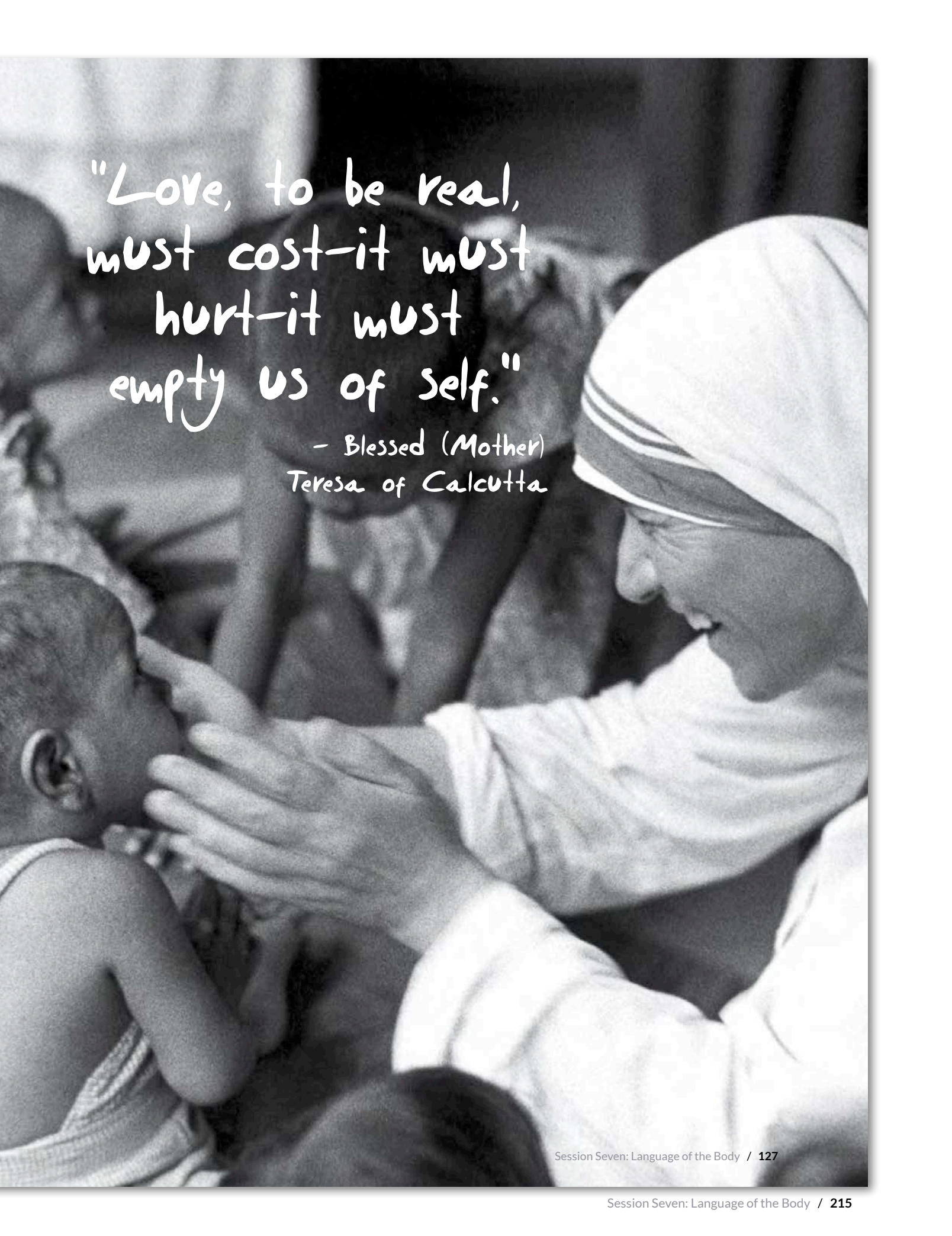


7.4 Overcoming Lies About the Body

1. Name three ways that the media or the wounds of life lead us to believe lies about the goodness of our bodies, for both men and women? What are practical steps you can take today to reject the lies and start believing that you are good?

2. Why do people sometimes live out of their wounds, as Crystalina mentioned, rather than taking the steps needed to heal those wounds?

3. Have you ever struggled to believe the truth that you are good and that God loves you? When these struggles come up, where do you go to receive the truth?



"Love, to be real,
must cost—it must
hurt—it must
empty us of self."

— Blessed (Mother)
Teresa of Calcutta

TO THE CORE

As we have learned, the body does not exist on its own. Rather, you are a body-soul composite. To be precise, you don't really *have* a body and a soul. You *are* your body and your soul—either a masculine body and masculine soul, or a feminine body and feminine soul. Therefore, your body *is* you. Your body reveals *God* and *you* to the world.

So if our bodies speak for us, what are we saying through them? Simple body language can be something fairly neutral, like a yawn, something positive, like genuflecting in church, or negative, like a not-so-friendly gesture on the freeway.

“You are your body and your soul—either a masculine body and masculine soul, or a feminine body and feminine soul.”

However, when St. John Paul II speaks of **the language of the body**, he is referring to something more profound than mere body language. The language of the body is the meaning of the body given to it by God. When men and women love as God created them to love, they communicate the truth about who they are created to be, and therefore express the love of God through their bodies.

However, with great power comes great responsibility. Since the body is capable of speaking, it is also capable of lying. For example, consider when Judas kissed Jesus while betraying him (see Mark 14:45). Judas' body said one thing, but his heart clearly said another. Remembering that we are created in the image and likeness of God, this language

of divine love is the body's “native” language. It is the language our bodies were created to speak: the truth.²

The Promises of the Body

When it comes to expressions of affection, the language of sexual intimacy is only true when it expresses marital love. Whether we know it or not, the true language of the sexual act says, “I am completely yours. I belong totally to you.” But this often is not what people really mean to say. Consider the situation of a teenage couple that is sexually active. They may be physically doing the same thing as a married couple, but they do not mean what their bodies are saying because they have not made the marriage commitment. A married couple has made a commitment in front of the Church and many witnesses, freely offering their whole lives to each other until death. On the other hand, two people who are dating or “hooking up” have given no promise of life-long commitment. Therefore, they are not making a total gift of self to each other. Even if the teenage couple's intentions are good, their act is still a lie expressed in the language of their bodies. They want one of the great joys of marriage—sexual relations, also known as marital relations—without the responsibilities and without the commitment.

Did you know that one of the traditional names for sex in marriage is “the act of marriage”? At one time, the fact that sexual intercourse expressed marital love was so well understood that we, as a culture, simply referred to it as “the marital act.” Today, this definition is barely known because sexual intercourse has become such a casual,

After the small group discussion, if the students haven't read the “To the Core” before this week's class, have them read silently to themselves or read aloud. If you are teaching the content yourself, have them close the book and listen. If time allows, have a brief discussion.

accepted behavior of unmarried people. People might choose to engage in the sexual act (because God gave us free will), but no one can change its meaning.

The Language of Creative, Faithful Love

Marriage carries with it many responsibilities, but none are more foundational than telling the truth. While most people eventually get married, we often hear that half of marriages end in divorce. One of the major causes is infidelity. If you choose to speak the truth with your body now while in high school—through purity and self-control—you will be training yourself in the faithfulness that is essential to future marital stability.

Perhaps the best thing you can do to prepare for a faithful marriage later is to learn to be faithful to the language of your body now. St. Paul tells us that **fornication** (having sex outside of marriage) and **adultery** (a married person having sex with someone who is not his or her spouse) are very serious sins (see 1 Corinthians 6:9) that can cause a lot of pain. Learning to speak the language of the body truthfully avoids a great deal of heartache.

When this language of sexual love is spoken between a man and a woman, the two become participants in the one-flesh union. At times, this union results in the creation of new life, making the two co-creators with God in his own work of creation.

In the beginning, the “Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2), signifying that the Holy Spirit was present with God the Father in the work of creation. This is why we say in the **Nicene Creed**, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life.” This same Holy Spirit creates life through the gift of sexual intimacy. Therefore, in order for the language of the body to be true, it must be open to the Holy Spirit’s creative presence. Not inviting the Holy Spirit into the marital act is like not inviting your mom to your family’s Mother’s

Day celebration; without her, the party can never be what it was meant to be.

The Language of Contraception

Some examples of the language of the body are clearly “true” or clearly “a lie.” Others take more thought and consideration. What is a couple saying when they introduce contraception into the marital act? Surely, spouses who love each other are at least attempting to say in the sexual union, “I am all yours.” As we discussed earlier, the giving of oneself in the sexual act is a profound thing. You are saying with your body, “I am totally committed to you—so much so, that I am willing to give you myself in this most intimate of ways.” But in reality, when a couple introduces contraception into their sexual union, they are saying with their bodies, “I refuse to give you all of myself. I won’t give you my fertility. I refuse to receive all of you. I won’t receive your fertility.” Instead of becoming one flesh, they remain divided, whether they intend to or not.

Couples often turn to contraception because of the fear of having a child. By his or her existence, a child who is conceived says, “I’m permanent, so you two should be as well!” But the couple often knows that they are not ready for the total giving and commitment that their act is saying, so they deny the natural process of life-giving love. In a sense, they see their fertility as a problem that needs to be fixed. In a sense, they treat pregnancy as a disease against which they must be protected or vaccinated. They may struggle to see the gift of fertility as something to be received with joy.

You might wonder, “If I can’t use a condom, then how am I supposed to protect myself?” Think about this: Does it sound like love if you are trying to protect yourself from your beloved and his or her fertility? We protect ourselves from enemies, not our spouse’s fertility or the child that may come from a union of love. Within marriage, if a couple needs to plan their family, the Church offers morally acceptable (and highly effective) methods

Continued ...

of spacing births, called Natural Family Planning. (See “Did You Know?” on page 122.) This will also be discussed more in-depth in Session Eight.

We are called to receive our beloved without reserve. Until you are married and ready to receive that person fully, it is not time to give that person your body. God did not design us to give ourselves away in pieces.

The Language of Pornography

Pornography presents another clear example of people lying with their bodies. The sexual act is meant to be a gift of self, and yet the people in the industry aren't giving themselves to anyone. They're merely exposing their bodies to others for the sake of earning money (or because they are forced into the business through the sex-trade industry). On the other side of the screen, the person viewing pornography is not giving or receiving love, but is doing the opposite. Without realizing it, everyone involved in pornography is separating a person's body from his or her soul. Think about it: In pornography, a person's body is the focus of all the attention, and yet the person is completely ignored. When we become accustomed to using others in this manner, we gradually lose our freedom to love.

It should also be noted that pornography is not merely a male issue. Whoever is exposed to it can form an addiction. Despite the increasing number of women who struggle with pornography, it is still often considered to be a “guy problem.” This unfair stereotype often leads to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression for the women who struggle with it. But lust is a human problem,

not a “guy problem.” Whether male or female, the addictions are real, the detrimental effects are real, but thankfully so is the redemption that God offers to everyone in need of healing.

The Sign (Language) of the Cross

After considering many lies in the language of the body, and the confusion brought about by sin, consider the true language of Christ's body: Beaten. Bruised. Bloodied. Broken for you. As he stretched out his arms to all of humanity from the Cross, he allowed himself to be crucified so that you could have victory over sin and freedom to live with him forever. No matter what our struggles may be, Jesus came to reestablish the truth of who we are, from the inside out. He did this so we can live in the freedom of balance and friendship with those of our own sex as well as the opposite sex. Jesus came to restore the balance within us, the balance between us, and the balance of the whole world around us.

The Crucifixion itself is more memorable than the words Christ spoke while being crucified. So powerful was his nonverbal promise of love made to us through the language of his body that it has become the standard visual aid in the Catholic Church. The crucifix is the preeminent symbol of love. The language of Christ's body on the Cross was so powerful that we now also use it at the start and end of every prayer.

What will your sign be? What will you say with your body today, tomorrow, and for the rest of your life? You could imitate Christ and learn to speak a beautiful language of love with your body by living sacrificially for others. In this life of self-donating love, you will find what it means to be fully human.

The Language of **GENDER**

You have already learned through this program that in the beginning, there was harmony between God and man, and between Adam and Eve. There was also harmony within each person. But with the dawn of original sin, humanity began to experience concupiscence. John Paul II noted that this brings with it a “difficulty in identifying oneself with one’s own body” (TOB 29:4). In other words, we all experience a tension between the material and immaterial parts of our humanity.

Some people seek to solve this problem by separating their true identity from their physical body. But this is impossible. The human person is a composite of spirit and matter, and our bodies express our personhood. This is easy enough to prove: Imagine if someone struck you, and you asked him, “Why did you hit me?” Now imagine if he replied, “I didn’t hit you. I hit your body.” Odds are, you would not be convinced or consoled by this bad anthropology. You and your body are not separate (at least until death).

In recent years many people have expressed the feeling that their gender identity is different from the sex that they were “assigned” at birth. In other words, they believe that their gender exists independently of their body. But if we try to separate who we are as persons from our bodies, we elevate our subjective feelings to become the measure of all truth.

Without question, a disaffection between one’s body and perceived gender is a difficult thing for anyone to experience. So what does the Church have to say about this? First off, God loves every one of these individuals. The deepest truth about their identity is not that they are “trans,” “gender variant,” “cis male,” or “non-binary.” Rather, the deepest truth about their identity is that they are beloved children of God. Each of them has dignity and inestimable worth and should be treated with love. Part of love is treating individuals with compassion and respect, because this is a very sensitive and personal topic. However, an essential element of love is speaking the truth.

The Church recognizes that for some individuals, their feelings seem more real than their anatomy. However, our sex isn’t something “assigned to us at birth.” One obvious reason for this is because our sex existed for nine months prior to our birth.

**“The fact is, our bodies
reveal our identity.”**

But more importantly, our sex is not something imposed on us by society. What society imposes are unfair gender stereotypes. As Pope Francis notes,

It is true that we cannot separate the masculine and the feminine from God’s work of creation ...
But it is also true that masculinity and femininity

Continued ...

are not rigid categories ... A rigid approach turns into an over-accentuation of the masculine or feminine ... Such rigidity, in turn, can hinder the development of an individual's abilities, to the point of leading him or her to think, for example, that it is not really masculine to cultivate art or dance, or not very feminine to exercise leadership.³

Among other things, gender stereotypes have caused some people to question their gender. But the solution isn't to deny the fact that God makes all people male or female, but to heal

“Our gender—and therefore our sexual difference—is a gift, not a decision or feeling.”

the distortions that have arisen within cultures about what it means to be a man or woman. Again, as Pope Francis teaches,

I ask myself, if the so-called gender theory is not, at the same time, an expression of frustration and resignation, which seeks to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it. Yes, we risk taking a step backwards. The removal of difference in fact creates a problem, not a solution.⁴

The fact is, our bodies reveal our identity. The male body reveals that the person is a man, and the female body reveals that the person is a woman (see TOB 20:5). This may seem overly simplistic and “binary” to people who live in a culture where social media profiles allow them to identify as any one of dozens of potential genders with the click of a button, but it remains true.

It's a good thing to desire to know one's self and to live without shame. God wants every person to know his or her deepest identity and to be able to find joy in it. Unfortunately, because the world denies the reality of original sin, it equates our fallen nature with the deepest truth of our identity. But as one Christian writer noted, “The answer is to realize that all of us are born alienated from what we were created to be. We don't need to fix what happened in our first birth; we need a new birth altogether.”⁵ Sadly, in the name of tolerance, our world wants us to identify with our wounds, rather than with our Healer.

Our gender—and therefore our sexual difference—is a gift, not a decision or feeling. The body is sacred and deserves to be treated with reverence rather than disdain. Furthermore, we cannot reduce our sexual differences to our sexual organs. Our differences as male and female go as deep as our souls (see TOB 21:3).

Despite these facts, some people claim that they are “asexual.” However, even if a person feels disinterested in sexual activity, in the words of St. John Paul II, “Every human being is by nature a sexual being, and belongs ... to one of the two sexes.”⁶ Our gender isn't a social construct, but a gift from God that we are called to accept, even if this process of acceptance involves struggle. One reason why this process has become so challenging is because our culture has drifted from its Creator. As the Church affirmed at Vatican II, “When God is forgotten the creature itself grows unintelligible,”⁷ and, as John Paul II

notes, “The Creator has assigned the body to man as a task, the body in its masculinity and femininity” (TOB 59:2). By understanding the purpose of our sexuality as male and female, we can discover the meaning of life and our call to love. However, if we eliminate the complementarity of our sexual difference, we eliminate the spousal meaning of the body, which reveals what it means to be human.

No one should disrespect or look down on someone who questions his or her gender. God made everyone in his image and likeness and gave each of us a dignity that is not dependent on the clarity of our self-awareness. If you struggle in this area of life, know that God loves you and he created you good. If you wrestle with your sexual identity in any way—and we all do in various ways—it is important to know you are not alone. Jesus wants to restore the truth of your masculinity or femininity and give you real peace in living it out.

If you feel that your body doesn’t fit with the gender you feel, the solution isn’t to change what is on the outside, but to let God inside. Often, people think the Church is unsympathetic toward people who experience

these challenges. But the reality is that love always tells the truth, and the truth is that the Church desires all people to live in authentic freedom—as the son or daughter that God has created them to be.

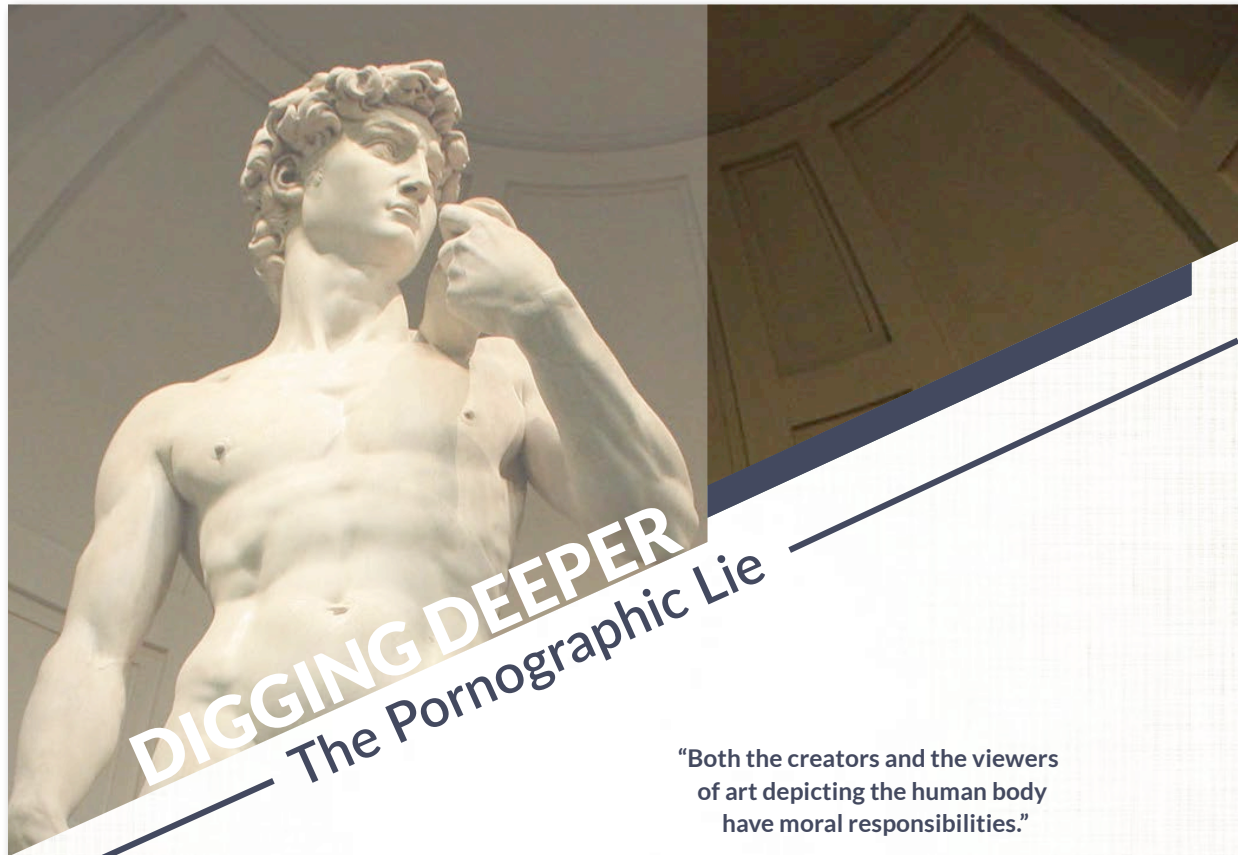
So what does the path forward look like for you and those that you love? It’s important to seek the help of a counselor who understands the truth about the body and the truth about love. Seek good community. You are not doomed to a life without intimacy. The Church wants you and is here for you. The Church is interested in patiently loving us through our troubles, inviting us to walk the difficult, mysterious path of healing. The Church is a good mother. She is more interested in loving her children through their questions and walking with them in their struggles for freedom, rather than making up a quick solution about it all. Stay close to the sacraments and continue to grow in your relationship with God, trusting that he did not make a mistake when he created you. You are very good, and if you fear that you are not, know that he promises, “Behold, I make all things new” (Revelation 21:5).

Pastoral Tip: The Language of Gender

This is a difficult and sensitive issue for many teenagers, as many have been led to believe that it is the proper, loving response to affirm someone’s gender confusion. However, as Pope Francis states, “The young need to be helped to accept their own body as it was created.”⁴ In an earlier section of the same document, Pope Francis outlined the divide and the truth regarding our cultural situation, when he wrote:

Yet another challenge is posed by the various forms of an ideology of gender that “denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programs and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time.” It is a source of concern that some ideologies of this sort, which seek to respond to what are at times understandable aspirations, manage to assert themselves as absolute and unquestionable, even dictating how children should be raised. It needs to be emphasized that “biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated.”⁵

Helping and walking with those who struggle with gender dysphoria on the long road to realizing and accepting the truth of their bodies is a merciful and loving act. We have case studies and further source material to help you with this issue in Leader’s Appendix A.



DIGGING DEEPER The Pornographic Lie

“Both the creators and the viewers of art depicting the human body have moral responsibilities.”

“A reciprocal circuit ... takes place between the image and the act of seeing, between the ethos of the image and the ethos of seeing. Just as the creation of the image ... imposes on the author, artist, or reproducer obligations not only of an aesthetic but also of an ethical nature, so also ‘looking,’ understood in the same broad analogy, imposes obligations on the recipient of the work” (TOB 63:7).

The body “expresses precisely ‘the element’ of the gift” (TOB 62:3). This means that as an “element,” the naked body is an agent of communion, providing a way for a person to give himself or herself to another. The body always carries its own dignity, and this means that it is possible to represent the naked body in art without objectifying the

person. John Paul II offers two points that must be analyzed. He calls them the **ethos of the image** and the **ethos of seeing**, which refer to the fact that any artistic expression of the body holds within itself an ethical character through both the way it is represented and the way it is viewed. This means that both the creators and the viewers of art depicting the human body have moral responsibilities.

If the artists (painters, photographers, actors, filmmakers) intend to arouse lust in the viewers of their art, they have violated the ethos of the image. On the other hand, the act of physically viewing art that portrays the human body carries with it a responsibility for the one who looks—the responsibility to look with purity at the person as a

134 / YOU.

STEP
7

Digging Deeper

If the students haven't read the “Digging Deeper” before this week's class, have the students read silently to themselves or read aloud. If you are teaching the content yourself, have them close the book and listen. If time allows, have a brief discussion.

subject to be loved, rather than as an object to be used. Looking at tasteful art with purity of heart is sometimes difficult, especially in our pornified culture. But it is possible to see the human body rightly if we allow Christ to begin redeeming us and our desires.

Pornography violates the ethos of the image and the ethos of seeing because there is one fundamental intention of this type of body “art”—to arouse lust and make the person “an object of ‘enjoyment’ intended for the satisfaction of mere concupiscence” (TOB 63:5).

In the first case, those who participate in the creation of pornography take an intimate view of the body, which rightfully belongs in an interpersonal relationship, and turn it into an object of “public property.” Once this violation happens, the body, detached from its true purpose, becomes an “object” to be used without limits. This deeply offends the true purpose of the body as a representation of the personal gift of self to another.

A body by itself without a soul is not a person; instead, it is an object. Pornography degrades the person by placing the focus only on the body, as if we could divide a person’s body and soul in order to merely enjoy the body. But this is impossible. John Paul II said that when the media uproots the naked body from its proper place within an interpersonal relationship, the body becomes “an object, and, what is more, in some way an anonymous object”

(TOB 62:4). An anonymous object is not the same as a person. Persons are meant to be loved, never used. This is why pornography degrades everyone involved. John Paul II also said that love is “the unification of persons.”⁸ With pornography, you are entering a fantasy play of lust, where every single character and spectator is a selfish one. There is no real relationship, no true gift of self, and no real union—only self-centered counterfeits.

“Pornography degrades the person by placing the focus only on the body, as if we could divide a person’s body and soul in order to merely enjoy the body.”

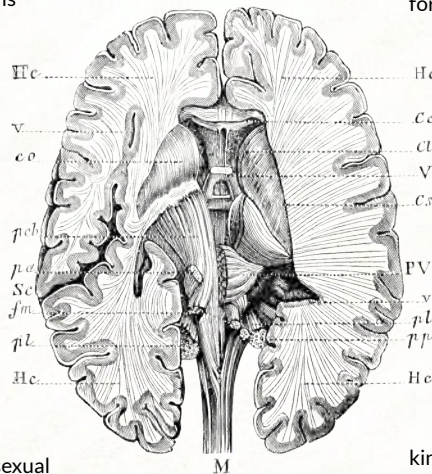
Though many girls have learned to cope with guys and their pornography by laughing at it or ignoring it, it should never be tolerated in a relationship, male or female. Pornography is largely responsible for the way many guys habitually **objectify** women, treating them as objects of pleasure, rather than as persons with dignity. Girls, if you want to be respected, demand respect from the guys in your life. Do not tolerate pornography or anything else that degrades you as a woman. Guys, if you want to be a real man, turn to Christ and allow him to purify your desires. Ask him for the grace to see women with respect. Learn how to love, and the girls around you will respect and appreciate you all the more for it.

Science and the Theology of the Body: The Medial Pre-Optic Nucleus

“Nobody’s getting hurt ... right?” Many people have repeated these words to themselves whenever their consciences nagged them about their habit of looking at porn. Years later, they wish they had been right. Although the images only took seconds to see, they would take years to forget.

One reason for this is the Medial Pre-Optic Nucleus (MPN), which is the pleasure center of the brain. The MPN is easily trained, so when sexual arousal accompanies a sexual image, the brain learns to associate sexual excitement with whatever it is experiencing. This is why there are cologne samples in porn magazines for men. The marketers of the fragrances want the men to associate those scents with sexual arousal, thus making them more likely to purchase the products.

So what do you imagine will happen to a person who trains his or her brain to associate sexual excitement with porn? Research shows that people who looked at porn were more likely to be less satisfied with their intimate partner’s affection, physical appearance, sexual curiosity, and sexual performance. They had conditioned their minds to look for arousal in hundreds of forbidden, degrading fantasies.



No matter how perfect the model portrayed is, the people viewing porn usually flip the page, swipe the screen, or click another image within a few moments. While their standard of physical beauty becomes that of impossible perfection, they experience arousal followed by boredom and dissatisfaction. But if the most seductive models fail to keep their interest for more than a few moments, what will happen to their spouse? How is he or she expected to captivate the porn consumer?

Some men think that it’s their right to be aroused by fantasies. By the time they get married, they think that marriage is going to be the fulfillment of porn. They may assume, “If my wife isn’t flawless, that’s kind of her fault.” Needless to say, the marriage suffers because the man’s ability to love is warped. As author Christopher West has said, “A man who develops a porn or masturbation lifestyle at a young age will, more often than not, carry those habits into marriage and cause untold suffering to his wife.”⁹

We have been created to make a gift of ourselves, but porn trains us to take our pleasure without regard for another. But healing is possible. To the extent we break away from the habit of porn—and invite God to heal our memories and desires—we can grow in the freedom to love.

136 / YOU.

STEP
8

Science and the Theology of the Body

This can be read along with “Digging Deeper,” followed by discussion, or treated separately as its own segment.

SESSION SEVEN
REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the “language of the body”?
2. Why did St. John Paul II call divine love the body’s “native” language?
3. What does the body “say” through sexual intercourse?
4. Why are unmarried people incapable of freely expressing (“saying”) the full meaning of sexual intercourse?
5. Name three truths and three lies of the body that are non-sexual.
6. Name three truths and three sexual lies in the language of the body.
7. What does the “one-flesh union” mean?
8. Who are the three involved in creation when, from the marital act, a new life is conceived?

Did You Know?

Those who have premarital sex are more likely to have extramarital sex (affairs)—and extramarital sex contributes to many divorces.¹⁰

Session Seven: Language of the Body / 137

STEP
9

Session Review

Use this section as a verbal review or a homework or classwork assignment. If you’re using this program for a high school curriculum, you can use this as material for quizzes and tests.

Live It Out

Pastoral Tip: Reconciliation

It would be good to remind students that an integral part of the sacrament of reconciliation is having a firm purpose of amendment. True contrition—real sorrow for sin—always holds within itself a desire to change or remedy the situation. Encourage your teens to recall that it is important that we have a firm purpose to amend our lives, to do whatever it takes to avoid the near occasion of sin in the future.

Overcoming Lust

Many who want to be pure have become so entrenched in lustful habits that they assume breaking free is impossible. If you share this assumption, do not give in to discouragement. To persevere in your desire to lead a pure life, practice the following steps:

- 1. Remove the temptation.** If you struggle with looking at porn, use a filter and accountability site like [CovenantEyes.com](#). If you struggle with remaining pure in relationships, avoid dating someone who will only bring out the worst in you. Date someone with high standards, whom you can see yourself possibly marrying. Also, refer to the dating tips in Appendix A (page 198). No matter your weakness, you have more control over it than you may think.
- 2. Frequent the sacraments.** Jesus said, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Therefore, if we pull away from confession and the Mass, it will only be a matter of time before we fall back into our old habits. Some people respond, “I’ve been to Mass and to confession, but I still mess up.” We must realize the sacraments do not remove our sexual desires or the causes of temptation; rather, they are like medicine that helps to heal our selfish desire to lust. But like any virtue, purity is not developed overnight. We must persevere. Also, it is important not to place your focus on a sacrament on what you’re “getting out of it.” Our relationship with God is a lot like our human relationships. If you’re in it only to take, it will be unbalanced. Only by giving of ourselves will the sacraments have a greater effect in our lives. So if you have a chapel at your church or school, spend time there. Considering that the average American spends over seven hours per day looking at screens,¹¹ it is safe to say that we can all make a little more time for God.
- 3. Keep busy.** St. John Bosco warned, “The principal trap that the devil sets for young people is idleness. This is a fatal source of all evil.” It is important that we keep busy and not feel bored or sorry for ourselves. Practice a sport. Take guitar lessons. Go out with friends. Serve the Church. As St. Jerome said, “Always be doing something worthwhile; then the devil will always find you busy.”
- 4. Set reachable goals.** For example, “I’m not going to look at porn today.” You will gain confidence in your ability to be pure if you focus on the next twenty-four hours instead of the next ten years. God only asks that you try to be pure one day at a time.
- 5. Pray for the redemption of your desires.** While it is good to stay active and set good goals, it is even more important to be still in the presence of God through prayer. To truly overcome lust, you will need to do more than just avoid temptation. A true change of heart is necessary. Spending quiet time with God will allow him to gently rehabilitate the desires of your heart—molding them into desires that are ordered toward him and a life of purity. Consider praying the following prayer, or one like it, on a daily basis: Lord, you are the giver of all good gifts, and I thank you for the gift of my sexual desires. I give you all of my desires, both holy and impure. Please “untwist” the lustful desires in me that sin has twisted and help me to grow in purity of heart, mind, soul, and body. Help me to experience good sexual desires that will help me to love as you intend for me to love. Amen.¹²

138 / YOU.

STEP
10

Live It Out

Have the teens read aloud or silently, then discuss how they can apply what they have learned to their lives.

WORK IT OUT

Assignment #1: Search through your music collection (or online) and find a song that speaks of telling the truth with the body. Find another that speaks a lie (but is still appropriate for conversation in class). Compare and contrast them in a short essay.

Assignment #2: Examine the following Scripture about King David (2 Samuel 11:1-27) and explain how this story reveals lies of the body. Write a short essay summarizing your findings.

Assignment #3: Search online for the *Journal of the American Medical Association* article “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ.” Write an essay

analyzing his crucifixion, applying your new knowledge of the language of the body. What signs and symbolism do you see in the things Christ said with his body?

Assignment #4: Utilize today’s social media-style of communication as practice for intriguing someone to dive deeper into the language of the body. Scan through this session to find or create three phrases of 140 characters or less that invite further investigation. Below each caption, write a paragraph that fully explains the concept.

Project #1: The human body in art versus pornography. Dig deeper into the primary source by reading John Paul II’s thoughts on the human body in art and pornography and the ethics involved. Relevant insights can be found in TOB 61-63. Write an in-depth paper explaining what he means by the “ethos of the image” and the “ethos of seeing.”

Project #2: Corporal works of mercy. The word “corporal” means “bodily.” What better way to live out the Theology of the Body than through the corporal works of mercy? There are seven corporal works of mercy:

1. Feeding the hungry
2. Giving drink to the thirsty
3. Visiting the sick
4. Sheltering the homeless
5. Visiting the imprisoned
6. Clothing the naked
7. Burying the dead

Consult your teacher for ideas for possible organizations or people whom you can serve; then choose one of the works listed above and see it through to completion. When you are finished, write an essay that summarizes your experience, particularly highlighting the response of others to your generosity. Note the body language of others as you use your own body to minister to them. Finally, reflect on the use of your own body and how it affected your own spiritual journey (and that of others) as you ministered to them by giving of yourself.



Work It Out

Have the teens choose one of the assignments to complete at home. To further immerse them in the material, consider assigning a project.

WHAT'S THAT WORD?

ADULTERY:

When two people have sexual relations despite the fact that at least one of them is married to another person.

ETHOS OF SEEING:

The responsibility of all viewers of the human body portrayed in art to see the person with dignity, not as an object to be lustfully desired.

ETHOS OF THE IMAGE:

The responsibility that every artist has to represent people with dignity, especially through the depiction of the human body in artistic form.

FORNICATION:

Engaging in sexual intercourse outside of marriage.

LANGUAGE OF THE BODY:

The meaning of the body inscribed in it by God, our Creator. When this meaning is freely spoken in words of truth, self-gift, and fidelity, it expresses the love of God through the body.

NICENE CREED:

The most widely accepted statement of Christian Faith, the Nicene Creed was first adopted at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325.

OBJECTIFY:

To treat someone as a thing rather than as a person through actions that disregard his or her inherent dignity as a human being.

PORNOGRAPHY:

The sexually explicit depiction of people, in words or images, created in order to cause the arousal of lust on the part of the observer.

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

- Philipians 4:8, NAB

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

All: Lord Jesus, help me to offer my body for the sake of others with authentic, sacrificial love. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

STEP
12

Closing Prayer

Before beginning the prayer, you may want to ask if anyone has any special intentions.