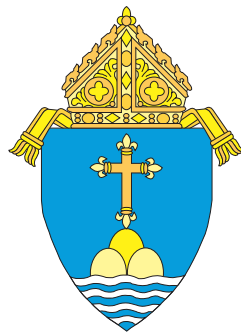


# CREATED FOR LOVE

## **God's Plan for Life, Love, Relationships & Marriage**



Respect Life Education Office - Archdiocese of Boston  
[www.RespectLifeEducation.com](http://www.RespectLifeEducation.com)

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Archbishop of Boston

September 3, 2014

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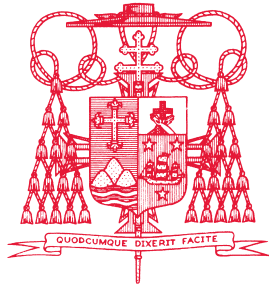
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*Created for Love* is a mandated Middle School Religion Curriculum designed to be integrated into the existing religion curricula in Grades 6, 7, & 8 in parishes and schools throughout the Archdiocese of Boston. Please use this text along with the DVD that accompanies it to share the beauty of God's Plan for Life, Love, Relationships & Marriage. For more information, resources, and curriculum training dates, please contact the Respect Life Education Office at 617-746-5964 or visit [www.RespectLifeEducation.com](http://www.RespectLifeEducation.com).



## CARDINAL'S OFFICE

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November, 2014

Dear Friends,

One of the most important gifts we can hand on to our youth is the gift of our faith, which will help them understand God's plan for life, love, relationships and marriage. For the past eight years, the *Created for Love* chastity curriculum has been taught to 7<sup>th</sup> grade students in schools and parishes throughout the Archdiocese. I am pleased to announce that important revisions have been completed on the *Created for Love* curriculum that will now be available for all middle school students in the Archdiocese.

The revised chastity curriculum is the result of collaboration between the Offices of Respect Life Education, Faith Formation & Parish Support, Catholic Schools, and Child Advocacy. The revisions concentrate on the joy of living according to God's plan while highlighting the universal call to holiness through the discernment of one's vocation. New sections on vocations, family life and adoption allow for a more comprehensive, integrated model that will be woven into the existing religion curricula in schools and parishes beginning in Grade 6 and continuing through Grade 8.

*Created for Love* is of utmost importance in the moral development of our Catholic youth. It lends support to Catholic parents whose duty it is to raise their children in the faith. I strongly endorse *Created for Love* and its synthesis of sound Catholic moral teaching and hereby direct all parishes and schools in its implementation.

Our expectation is that *Created for Love* will be phased-in between January and June 2015, with all parishes and schools fully embracing this mandate by September 2015. Please give this curriculum your most serious attention.

In order to assist the schools and parishes of the Archdiocese, the Respect Life Education Office has been directed to coordinate all training and implementation with the support of the Offices of Faith Formation & Parish Support, Catholic Schools, and Child Advocacy. Grateful for your cooperation in incorporating *Created for Love* into our mission to teach God's Word and Truth, I remain

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Archbishop of Boston

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**Cardinal Seán: Welcome**



# IDENTITY

## Who am I? Discovering God's Gift

When we meet someone for the first time, we usually begin by telling each other our name. As we get to know each other better, we may share where we are from as well as some of the activities we are involved in, like playing a sport or a musical instrument. We may also share some of our favorite things: favorite food, favorite color, favorite song, favorite TV show, etc.



As we become friendly with another person it can be fun to talk about the things we have in common. One of the most important things that every human person has in common is that each and every one of us is created in the image and likeness of God. Each human person is created by love and for love and is a unique, unrepeatable masterpiece created by the Master builder...God! Our dignity and worth does not come from the

way we look or the way we dress. Nor does it come from our achievements whether they happen in the classroom, at a sporting event or an extracurricular activity. Our dignity and worth doesn't even come from how others treat us. Instead every human person from the moment of his/her conception (from the beginning moment of life inside their Mother's belly!) becomes a daughter or son of the King of Kings!

***"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I appointed you as prophet to the nations."  
~Jeremiah 1:5***

Girls, you are the crown of creation! Each of you is a *beautiful* princess of a Father who loved you into creation and continues to love you every day of your life! Boys, you



are noble princes...created to love, honor and protect, the way God does for His Church! As sons and daughters of the King, we are given great responsibility!

***"When God created human beings, He made them in the likeness of God; He created them male and female. When they were created, He blessed them and named them humankind."  
~Genesis 5: 1-2***



## Created in the Image and Likeness of God

God created us from love, to be loved, to spread love! God is with us from the very beginning when we are conceived in our Mother's womb and remains with us for all eternity! God has a beautiful plan for each and every one of us!



***“For I know well the plans I have in mind for you—says the LORD—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope.”***

***~Jeremiah 29:11***

God's plan for every human being involves love. Birds were created to fly and fish were created to swim but human beings were created for love! Because we were created *from love*, it only makes sense that we were created *to love*—God and others—and *to allow* God and others to love us! The one thing we can be certain of is that when we follow God's plan for our lives then it will always bring great joy! It doesn't mean life will be perfect and free from suffering, but when we stay close to God through prayer and when we receive the Sacraments (i.e. Eucharist & Reconciliation) on a regular basis, then living as a child of God becomes much easier and brings joy and peace to our lives! When we (or others) stray from God, it hurts our hearts and souls. That is why when people say or do something unkind to another, it can hurt that person very deeply. Our hearts were made for love, not for hurt! When you are living a life according to God's plan, our hearts will be happy and at peace. As St. Augustine said, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in You, O Lord.” Just look at the example of Jesus. His life had ups and downs just like ours does and He suffered the ultimate suffering out of love for each of us. Jesus' life teaches us about true, sacrificial and unconditional love!



**#1 Created IN Love, Created BY Love, Created FOR Love: Fr. Matt Williams**

God created each human person as body and soul. We do not just *have* a soul or *have* a body but instead we *are* a body and soul together—united as one! Our body and soul make us completely human from the very moment of conception until the moment of natural death. Our visible body united with our invisible soul makes us a complete human person! The only way our body and our soul are separated is when we die.

As a result, we differ from *all* other creatures on the earth! Our lives come with great responsibility. We are responsible not only to care for our body and soul but also to love God and love others as we love ourselves. We realize that sometimes it's not easy to love the way God intended us to love.





Some people around us may not be good examples of loving the way God intended and many times they influence the way we choose to live. Sometimes we become confused by the real definition of love. People in our lives, along with television shows, movies, music, video games and social media all contribute to how we view love. Many times, these influences can be harmful because they portray false things and call it love. The good news is that when God asked us to love like He loves, He actually showed us what He meant. He loved us so much that He suffered and died for us. *Think about that for a minute.* God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, into the world as a tiny baby, *just* like you and me. He grew up in a small town with His young mother, Mary and



*Childhood of Jesus Christ, by Del Parson*

His foster father, Joseph. He shared the same emotions as we do! At times, He felt misunderstood and frustrated. He felt sad and disappointed. He laughed and was joyful. He felt loved by others and He gave love to all. Jesus was fully human in every way, but sin. Through all of life's ups and downs, Jesus always trusted in His Father's loving plan. He always knew that God, Our Father, would be with Him, even when

things were difficult...even when He suffered and died on the cross. Jesus knew that to love like God loves, it meant that sometimes we must sacrifice our wants and desires and suffer for the sake of those we love.



## Created for Love

True love is a sacrifice. True love always seeks to give and never seeks to get. We are drawn to true and authentic love because our hearts were made for it! A famous teen speaker, Jason Evert, sums it up beautifully; "Because we are made in the image and likeness of God and God is love-we are made in the image and likeness of love."



### #2 What Satisfies Our Hearts: Jason Evert

Saint Pope John Paul II reminds us that, "Real love is demanding. I would fail in my mission if I did not clearly tell you so." Some people have a difficult time giving and receiving love the way God intended and sometimes people may even feel like they don't deserve to be loved. They may have wounds from past relationships that has made their vision cloudy and may cause them to be afraid of authentic love. Past experiences and heartbreak can at times impair our ability to see the beautiful love God has planned for us.





During these times, Jesus asks us to bring our wounded hearts and our fears to Him. It takes time in prayer and a lot of patience to work everything out, but Jesus is the *only* one that can properly heal our hearts while restoring our vision so that true and authentic love becomes our focus. Overcoming heartache, fear, and disappointment is always worth the effort, hard work, and patience that is necessary to experience true love!

So now that we know that we were created differently than any other creature on the planet because we are both body and soul, then our life needs to take on a whole new meaning! We often hear a lot about taking care of our body by eating healthy foods, not watching too much television, getting enough rest, exercising, not smoking and not using harmful drugs.



These are all very important things for our bodies! But do we also take care of our souls? Remember, body and soul cannot be separated except through death, so therefore it makes sense that the way we use our body will affect our soul. And since our soul lives forever, then it is very important to care for our soul by following God's



plan for our life. After all, God created us so we could spend eternity with Him in Heaven! So following God's ways here on earth are very important for our eternal life.

***Do not be afraid, then, when love makes demands. Do not be afraid when love requires sacrifice.***  
***~Saint Pope John Paul II***

## God's Creation vs. Culture

So many things in our world can lead us astray and even seem more fun and exciting than what God has in store for us. These are temptations that can possibly lead us to sin. These are not God's ways. It is important to remember that all the things the world has to offer will *never ever* compare to what God has in store for us...both here on earth and especially in Heaven! When we begin to replace God with other people and other things and even when we put other people and worldly pleasures before God then we are disobeying God's first commandment: "I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods besides me."



**#3 Teens Talk: Relying on God**

Sometimes without even realizing it, we begin to treat other people and even things of this world as if they were gods. We begin to move away from God, His Sacraments and His commandments because we prefer to spend our time doing other things. Perhaps sporting events and extracurricular activities have taken the place of Sunday Mass. Sometimes, hanging out with friends or sleeping in seem more fun and appealing than giving thanks to God at Sunday Mass. Sports, friends, jobs, etc. are not bad in themselves, but when *anything or anyone* replaces God or causes us to put God in second place then they can become occasions of sin and certainly are not good for our soul. “The world is passing away, and also its desires; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.” (John 2:17)



No matter what circumstances occur in your life and no matter what your family upbringing has been like, always remember that you are here for a reason. It is no accident that you are alive at this point in time. God *wanted* you to be alive from the moment of your conception and He wants you to be alive now! God wants a relationship with YOU! He created you for a purpose at this very moment in time! Your life will never make sense until you realize that you were made *by* God and *for* God and that He has a plan for your life because He loves you unconditionally! It is only in knowing and loving God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, and our destiny!



**#4 Teens Talk: What Would Jesus Do?**

**#5 Teens Talk: Why Believe? Why Pray?**



# LIVING A LIFE OF LOVE & VIRTUE

## Love vs. Lust

Think about three things that you love.

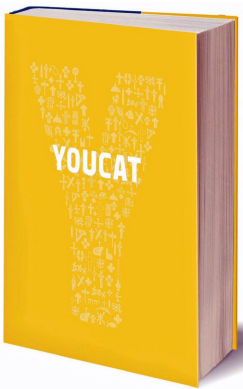
People are often confused with the true meaning of love. The definition of love has taken on so many different meanings. Now think about love as it was described in Chapter 1. Think about the characteristics of Christ's love for each of us.

Look at the things on your list. Does your love for these things compare to Christ's love for us? Often times we say we "love" something (pizza, chocolate, a musician, an actor/actress, a TV show, a song, etc.) but do we *truly* love those things or do we just *like* them very much? If we're careful about how we use certain words we can begin to have a better understanding of what the words truly mean.



### #6 Teens Talk: Types of Love

## Character Building: Virtue vs. Sin



A *virtue* is a good habit leading us to make good moral choices. Love is a virtue, often referred to as charity. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "a virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do [what is] good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself/herself.

*The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his/her sensory and spiritual powers; he/she pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.*" (CCC, 1803)

Love is a virtue that allows us to be unselfish and desire what is best for the other person. In an effort to bring about good and to do what is best for others and ourselves, we are often called to sacrifice our own wants and desires and put God and others first. We sacrifice for the ones we love so that we can help them grow in holiness and grow closer to God. Our purpose is to help each other get to Heaven! Imagine how much happiness would exist in this world if we all did good things for each other and treated each other how God intended? When we live virtuous lives and when we love others according to God's plan for life, love, and relationships, we grow toward

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***The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his/her sensory and spiritual powers; he/she pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.***

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Heaven together...as one family under God! Jesus taught us how to live a life of virtue and He especially taught us how to love unselfishly. He was so unselfish that He suffered and died for us so that one day we may have eternal life with Our Father in Heaven.

St. Gregory of Nyssa once said, *“The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.”* Our world might laugh at the thought of that but with God’s grace we are able to grow in holiness and grow in virtue! We can’t do it on our own because as humans we are likely to be tempted to choose sin over virtue. We are easily distracted by the ways of our world and tempted to do things that are not of God’s plan. Think of examples of things associated with sin/fitting in...dressing and dancing immodestly, watching TV shows and movies that do not honor a person’s dignity, listening to music that has bad or disrespectful lyrics, etc. When Jesus was with His disciples, “Jesus looked at them and said, “For human beings this is impossible, but for God *all* things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26)

“The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (love) are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as His children...” (CCC 1813)



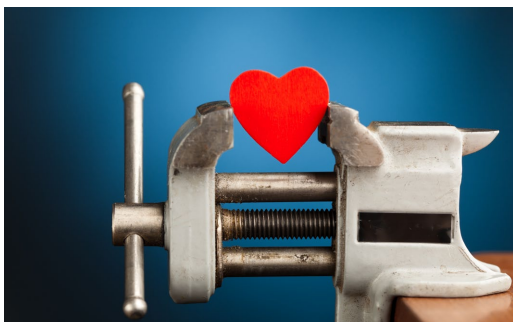
In other words, it will be very difficult to live a virtuous life without God! We need Him and we need His grace in order to follow His plan for life, love, and relationships! It is important that we stay close to God through the Sacraments (weekly Mass attendance and monthly confession) and that we pray to Him daily and ask for His grace to be able to lead a virtuous life. We might think we can do it alone, but we simply cannot. The virtue of love is a gift from God Himself since He is the author of love.



**#7 Teens Talk: God’s Love for Us**

## Truth vs. Lie

Earlier in the chapter, we mentioned how often we confuse love with lust. So if love is a virtue then the opposite of love is lust. And the opposite of a virtue is called a vice. A vice is bad habit. A vice is immoral, meaning it affects



our moral behavior and can lead us to sin. Lust is an emotion or feeling of intense desire that can lead us to think about and even treat another human being like an object for our own pleasure. Lust is the opposite of love. Lust seeks to get, while love seeks to give.

How often do we say that we “love” another person...sometimes even if we’ve never met him/her. Think about the times we’ve misused

the word “love.” “I loooove \_\_\_\_\_ (think of a celebrity, sports player, singer, actor, actress, etc.)” But do we really even *know* that person? We may enjoy the personality we see on TV or the music they sing or even the way they perform on the court, field, or ice and even perhaps how they look. But once again, we’re misusing the word *love*. Sometimes what we’re really doing is lusting after these people or things. Remember, lust is the



opposite of a virtue and it causes us to view human beings as objects for our own pleasure. When you say you “love” someone, be sure you’re not confusing love with lust.

This is not uncommon in our culture today. We often use the word “love” when in reality it is “lust.” Lust pretends to tell the truth but is really a lie. It’s a lie because lust is not interested in doing what is best for another person. It seeks to get and not give.

Don’t be fooled and don’t allow others to fool you! You are a child of

God who is worthy of true, authentic, God-like love that will last a lifetime...not something fake that will never last!

Think of another popular phrase that says, “I *fell* in love!” We hear this all the time! Susan and Victor *fell* in love! But if we think about it, we’re misusing our words again. Susan and Victor didn’t literally *FALL* in love! Isn’t “falling” something we try to avoid? Falling hurts! The way we describe one of God’s most precious gifts is very important! It’s not wrong when people use that phrase but we must be mindful of what we’re really saying!



## God’s Plan for Life, Love, and Relationships



### #8 What is Love? Pete & Therese

God teaches us that love is a *choice*! We don’t really fall in and out of love! We *choose* to love or we *choose* not to love. Often times we can get swept up in the many emotions surrounding a relationship that it may *seem* like we’re “falling in love.” It even sounds a bit magical and romantic. But be careful and remember that *true* and

***Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. ~1 Corinthians 13: 4-7***



*authentic, God-like* love is a choice! What happens when those emotions fade away and things start to get boring? Do we then “fall out of love?” That’s what many love stories, movies and songs portray, right? We may have even heard our friends or relatives use those terms. But true, authentic God-like love doesn’t fall. True, authentic God-like love makes a conscious choice to love another person. True, authentic God-like love doesn’t count the cost. True, authentic God-like love suffers for the other and makes sacrifices for the other. True, authentic God-like love wants what is best for the other person...*always*. The goal of true, authentic God-like love seeks to help the one we love get to Heaven!

So remember, *you* control whom you choose to love. You can’t just fall in and out of love but you *can choose* to love by your own *free will*! Think about the way Jesus loves us! Jesus willingly chose to die on the cross out of love for us. He didn’t just make this decision on a whim! He *knowingly* chose to suffer and die for our sake. He knew it would hurt and He chose to die for us anyway...so that we could be in Heaven with Him for all eternity. That’s how much He loves us! That’s how much we are called to love God and others.

***Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.***  
~Philemon 4:8



### #9 Teens Talk: Our Faith Teaches Us About Authentic Love

It’s never easy, but you *are* worth it! God made your heart to desire this kind of true, authentic God-like love and *nothing* else will *ever* satisfy your heart. Our hearts will always be broken if we try to replace authentic love with anything else!

God’s plan for our lives is based on what is true, good, and pure. God’s plan for life, love, and relationships is one that will always bring joy and peace to our lives.

Now that we understand that love involves our free will and that we deliberately choose love, it is important to remember that when we treat another human being like property or like an object for our own pleasure that we are violating their dignity as a human person. God created us from love and for love and therefore we should always strive to honor *His design* by respecting others and ourselves because every human person is made in the image and likeness of God. God knows that not every person is going to be your best friend, but there is never a reason to make fun of, bully, or look down on another person. We are called to treat every human person with dignity and respect from the moment of their conception until the moment of natural death. When we stay close to God in the Sacraments we begin to understand His plan and are better able to live according to it.



“Jesus makes charity (love) the *new commandment*...When Jesus says: ‘As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.’ And again: ‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.’” (CCC 1823)

Once we understand the meaning of the word “virtue” it becomes easier to understand the definition of sin. The *Catechism* teaches us that, “at the core of sin is a rejection of God and the refusal to accept His love. This is manifested [shown] in a disregard for His commandments.” (CCC 385-390) Have you ever felt rejected? Has anyone ever refused your love? It’s not a good feeling.



In fact, it can break our hearts and leave us feeling quite lonely. When we sin, we are turning our back on God and rejecting His love. Sin separates us from God, our source of life and happiness.

You may ask, why in the world would we purposely choose the opposite of life, love, and happiness? It doesn’t seem to make much sense, does it? But sin is sneaky! Sin masks itself so it seems fun and exciting!

*Think of some examples of sin (turning away from God) that may seem like a good idea at the time, but later*

*we realize that the choice we made was not a very good one.*

We can sin in a variety of ways...in our thoughts, words, actions, in the ways we are selfish and choose our desires over what is best for ourselves and others. We also sin when we are lazy and don’t put God first. Remember earlier when we talked about how each human person is created body and soul? It’s important to remember that what we do with our body affects our soul!



***Our visible bodies express truth about our invisible soul.***



**#10 Teens Talk: God Gives Us Hope!**



Think of the Eucharist for a minute. As Catholics, we are taught and we believe that the bread and wine that are brought to the altar during Mass become the *actual* Body and Blood of Jesus Christ! After the consecration, the bread and wine are no longer mere bread and wine even though their appearance doesn’t change. In Holy Communion, we receive our Lord...His flesh and blood. They are not symbols but an actual gift of Himself. Jesus promised that He would never leave us so He gives Himself to us in the Most Holy Eucharist! He becomes



part of us; body and soul. WOW, what a precious gift! Jesus becomes One with us every time we receive the Eucharist! How cool is that? We actually participate in a miracle every time we receive Jesus in the Eucharist!

By receiving Jesus in the Eucharist and even by praying to and worshipping Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration, we are given special graces to



be more like Christ! Grace is a free gift from God that inspires us to lead virtuous lives.

It is through God's grace that we have the ability to love like He loves!

Now think about your own body. How does your body reflect the miracle of Jesus? Think about the ways in which we use our bodies. Jesus taught us to honor our body. When we receive His Body and Blood, He becomes part of us, and we become living tabernacles of our Lord!

Jesus then asks us to go out and teach others about God's love and about His commandments. So think again. Do I use my body to build up the Body of Christ? Or do I use my body to reject God's love by committing sin? Do I flaunt my body with tight or skimpy clothing or by the way I dance simply to attract the attention of others?

Do you know why we genuflect, kneel or bow when we enter a Catholic Church? In every Catholic Church, there is a tabernacle that safely protects the Eucharist...



"A woman is so sacred that she is a walking tabernacle which is why men get down on one knee to propose marriage."

~Archbishop Fulton Sheen

Jesus. We genuflect, kneel or bow every time we pass in front of the tabernacle because it is a special way to show honor and respect to the One who saved us! Ladies, do you know why men get down on one knee before they propose marriage to the woman they love? (See *Archbishop Sheen's quote to the left.*) We are all called to be living tabernacles...to be Christ for others. Our bodies have the ability to express God's love to the world!



Discuss ways in which we use our body for good and ways in which we use our bodies for bad (i.e. handshake, hug, high five, genuflect, hitting, head butting, sexual activities outside of marriage).

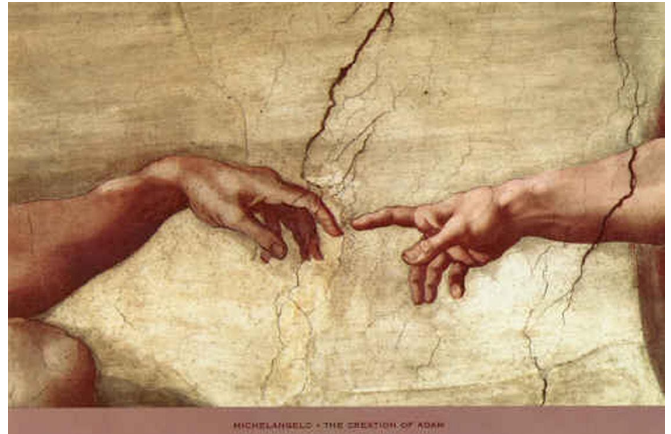
Don't forget that committing a sin doesn't just happen with the things we say to one another, but also with the things we do...with our bodies. Our bodies were created to share God's love...in the way we live, the way we act, and in the way we love others.



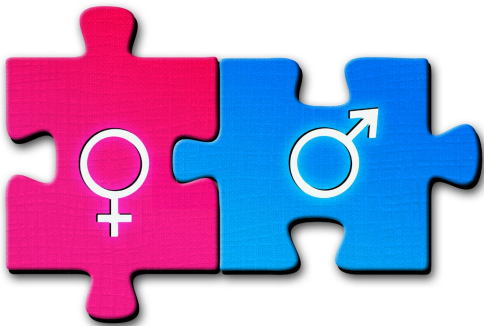
We've spent a lot of time talking about how the human person is created in the image and likeness of God and how that means that we are called to show love. But *how* does God actually want us to show love? Our world certainly shows us many ways of how *not to* love! The world shows us how to use our bodies for selfishness, lust, and even how to abuse others. God's design and His plan for life, love, and relationships are *VERY* different than what the world portrays.

God designed us to be chaste. How many of you have ever heard of the virtue called, *chastity*? Chastity is the virtue that helps us to live according to God's plan for our sexuality. So often people hear the word chastity and think that the Church is giving us more rules to follow and that God doesn't want us to be truly happy...He just wants to control us. **TOTALLY** untrue! What may seem like a "rule" or "restriction" is actually a beautiful gift from God!

God designed a man and woman's body to share intimate physical love within the Sacrament of Marriage. Sexuality refers to how God beautifully made man and woman differently, yet complementary. ***"I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well."*** (Psalm 139:14) He did this on purpose and it is a good thing...it is all part of God's design! *Read The Creation Story in Genesis 1: 26-31.*



### #11 Teens Talk: Authentic Love & Chastity



Complementary means that both man and woman have their own unique characteristics that make us physically different and also allow us to think and experience emotions differently. Men and women were created equally but they go together like two puzzle pieces. Two puzzle pieces that look the same don't fit together, they don't make a complete picture. God made man and woman to each be an image of Him, but He made us complementary so that together we more perfectly reflect Him.

The unique physical differences of men and women's sexuality make it possible for them to conceive children.

These differences exist as part of God's plan so that we can support one another and live in harmony in our relationships. Ever hear the old saying, "opposites attract?" This is probably true because, according to God's design, one person can make up for what the other is lacking.

God gave man and woman as a gift to each other, so that together we could more fully experience and express His great love! This love is so sacred that God created it to exist within its own Sacrament. He gave

*Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate. ~Matthew 19:4-6*

us the Sacrament of Marriage so we can experience physical love, or sex. Yes, God created sex! God created sex to be an expression of love between husband and wife that bonds them together and allows them to participate in the creation of new life. Wow, what a gift! Marriage is far more than a legal document that binds two people together...it is a lifelong covenant that unites two people together forever!



**#12 What is Chastity: Jason Evert**

**#13 What is Love? God's Plan for Dating: Jason Evert**

# GOD'S CALL AND MY RESPONSE

## What is a Vocation?

A vocation is a call or an invitation from God. Our first or primary vocation from God is to be holy. As our Creator, God made us in His image and likeness and called us into our very existence. In turn, we are called to be open to God's will and to trust in Him as our loving Father who created us in love and for love. One thing we know for sure is that belief in God and responding to His plan for our lives never leaves us disappointed! When we pray, live our lives for God, and stay close to the Sacraments, we become holy. Each and every human person is called to holiness. Each and every one of us is called to be a saint!

A vocation is a call from God. No matter what God is calling you to, each of us is called to live a life of holiness according to God's plan. Girls, maybe God is calling you to become a religious sister or a wife and mother! Whether a religious sister, or a wife and mom, rest assured God is calling you to greatness! Guys, do you think God might be calling you to be a priest? Perhaps God is calling you to be a husband and father! No matter what God is calling you to, it's exciting to think about your future and the awesome plans God has in store for you!



***"Do NOT be satisfied with mediocrity! The world will offer you comfort. But you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness!" ~ Saint John Paul II***

*A vocation is different than a person's career or job.* A job helps provide necessary things for you or your family like shelter, food and clothing. A vocation is much different because it is a calling from God that is unique and is meant just for you! There is no other person on earth that can fulfill your vocation!

God is calling upon you and your unique gifts to help bring His love to the world, one person at a time, as is the case of parents who care for their children and teach them virtues, and how to live a holy life.

It is important to remember that your vocation or call from God always comes *before* your job and your paycheck. This always involves sacrifice, but in the end, it is *always* worth it and is beneficial to you and your loved ones. Our vocation as husband or wife, parent, or priest or sister helps to sanctify us (make us holy). God gives each of us a unique vocation to help grow closer to Him and to help bring others to His Kingdom.



**#14 What is a Vocation? Collin & Meghan**

Ultimately, your vocation should help lead you to holiness. The particular job you do to help pay the bills may change over time but your vocation to holiness remains the same throughout your life. At home, at work, and at play we should always be striving for holiness! We don't act one way at Church or at home and then another way at work or school.

*God's call to holiness is for every day, in all situations.*

## Types of Vocations

Sometimes it's difficult to know exactly what God is calling us to...priesthood, consecrated life, married life, single state. So many choices! We should always pray for God's guidance...this is called discernment. Discerning God's will for us demands faith, trust, and patience. No matter what vocation God is calling you to, each of us is called to take God's invitation seriously and respond with faith, trusting that God will give us *exactly* what we need in order to fulfill His will. Ultimately, we have to remain close to God in order to know exactly what vocation God is calling us to and to be given the grace to fulfill His call.

God may be calling you to many things in your life but one thing we know for sure is that God calls us to live a life of holiness. Living a life of holiness doesn't mean that you will never experience sin or suffering or be unhappy, sad, confused, angry or disappointed. What it does mean is that God is with us every moment of every day to bring us strength, comfort and peace. When we pray and receive the sacraments often we are given God's grace to overcome life's challenges and discover true happiness and joy in our vocation!

Guys, have you ever thought about becoming a priest? Do you know any priests? Perhaps you have seen your parish priest at Mass or perhaps he has visited your classroom from time to time. If you have spent any time with a priest, you will quickly realize that they are just "regular guys" like you who have an extraordinary call from God to serve His Church. They are "regular guys" just like you because they most likely were involved in similar activities that you are involved in...sports, music, video games, etc. when they were growing up.



### #15 Vocations: It's Everybody's Business: Providence College Seminarians

In fact, he may still enjoy some of those same things (sports, video games, music, etc.) Just because he became a priest doesn't mean that he didn't (or still doesn't) lead a normal, typical life just like the rest of us. After all, he wasn't born a priest. The difference is that although a priest is a "regular guy," he has an extraordinary calling. In order to answer God's call he spent time discerning (seriously thinking and praying about) God's call for his life and discovered the great gift of the priesthood. When thinking about the priesthood, it is important to get to know priests. Maybe your family could invite your parish priest over for dinner? In doing so, you'll learn more about who he is and what led him to the priesthood. Maybe your parish has a Youth Group and you can talk to Father in that setting...or maybe just stop and chat with him after Mass on Sunday. You may discover what





an amazing life he has and you may even discover that God is calling YOU to that life too! Pray about it, talk to priests, and even think about attending a retreat day to learn more about the priesthood!

When a man is seriously considering entering the priesthood, he first enters a seminary. A seminary is a place where men live and go to school for a number of years (at least 4) to learn more about God and the Church while studying, praying and hanging out with like-minded men. Some seminarians start the process soon after High School and instead of going to a regular college they go to the Seminary College. Others may decide to enter the seminary after college and some even after holding a job for many years. Being a seminarian doesn't mean that you're automatically going to become a priest, it just means that you're discerning God's call. Some seminarians discover that God may be calling them to a different vocation... perhaps to marriage.



If God is calling you to be a priest, He is calling you to give your life to His Church...He is calling you to receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders. God is calling you to help to make the world holy by bringing Christ to His people!



**#16 God's Call to Priesthood, Part 1: Mike**

**#17 God's Call to Priesthood, Part 2: Kevin**

The priest does this in a unique way by acting as Christ here on earth. Not long before Christ died, He called 12 men to be His apostles...to be His first priests here on earth. He entrusted them with the care of His Church and Her people. Jesus asked His apostles to leave everything behind and live a life serving the Church. The priest is the only one that can give us the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist! During the Holy Mass, it is the priest, who calls upon the Holy Spirit, to transform the bread and wine into the actual Body and Blood of Jesus Christ whom we receive in Holy Communion. The priest also acts *in persona Christi* when he hears our confession and offers absolution from our sins! What better gifts than to receive Jesus in the Eucharist and to have our sins completely forgiven and wiped away!

The priest today has that same responsibility...to care for the spiritual well being of God's people. At the ordination of a diocesan priest, the priest makes two vows or promises. He promises to live a celibate life (to not get married and to not have sex) and he vows to be obedient to the local Cardinal, Archbishop or Bishop who leads the Church. Some priests also take a vow of poverty promising to live a simple life without owning expensive things or living in lavish homes.



A priest foregoes marriage to a woman and leads a celibate life because in a very real way he is married to the Church. When a man is ordained to the priesthood he gives himself fully and completely to God and His Church. He is available 24/7 to serve God and His people. He sacrifices having a wife and children so that he can help us get to Heaven! He does this by offering us the Sacraments on a daily basis and by being readily available for whatever God calls him to do. For example, a priest may be called to the scene of an accident or to a hospital or nursing home to offer the Sacrament of the Sick to an ill or injured person. These calls can come day or night...and the priest must be ready at a moments notice to serve God's people. Some priests even serve in the military as military chaplains. They travel with the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard to offer spiritual support to the troops...both here and in foreign lands. When our troops are serving our country and are away from their families, the chaplain can offer a lot of comfort to these men and women when they're away from home and missing their families. The military base or ship becomes like a Church or parish because the priest is available to offer the Sacraments and spiritual guidance to those in need.



It is important to know that when God calls us to a vocation, he calls all of us...fully, completely, totally...100%. When we talk about marriage later in this chapter, we'll talk more about what that means.

These are just a few of the many things that the priest offers to our Church and to our world! What an amazing life...what a heroic life...what a blessed life!



### #18 My Vocation Story: Fr. Matt Williams



Now, remember when we talked about male and female complementarity and how God calls each of us to a unique vocation, one that can only be fulfilled by you and you alone!

Well God didn't forget you, girls! God may be calling some of you to consider entering the convent. In a unique way, the sisterhood complements the priesthood. When both men and women offer their unique gifts and talents to the world, our world becomes

a more beautiful and loving place! Girls, have you ever met a sister? Perhaps there is a sister in your school or parish?

Sisters live and work in the world in unique ways. Some are nurses, teachers, social workers and some assist the priests in the parish doing a variety of things. Sisters offer great gifts to our world by taking vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In a similar way that priests do, sisters devote their lives completely to Christ in service to His Church.

The sisters don't celebrate the sacraments the way priests do, but they are radical witnesses of Christ's love in our world. Through their unique work in the community and always remaining centered in prayer, the sisters bring the Gospel to those who may never hear it if it weren't for them! There are many different orders of sisters throughout the country and throughout the world. Some orders are dedicated to teaching the faith to young people, while some orders are dedicated to praying for the people in our world. Others are involved with helping the poor and homeless and some are working with young pregnant women who may need care, support, and love



during their pregnancy and after they give birth to their children. In a unique way, the sisters bring Christ to those that need Him most. God called upon Mary, our Blessed Mother, to bear the Christ child in her womb. There is no greater calling than to be the Mother of the Savior of the world! In a very real way, sisters offer a maternal presence to our world...much like our Blessed Mother, Mary does. Sisters fulfill a role that can only be fulfilled by the unique love and nurturing heart of a woman.



### #19 God's Call to Religious Life: Daughters of Mary of Nazareth

Consider spending time in Eucharistic Adoration, which allows time in silence before the Lord, giving you the opportunity to get to know Jesus and to develop a relationship with Him to better hear and respond to His call.

Although some of you may be called to be a priest or religious sister, many are being called to marriage and family life so we will spend most of this chapter discussing God's plan for life, love, marriage and family.

Why are girls so drawn to books and movies that depict great love stories? Why are boys drawn to books and movies that depict nobility and courage? There's a reason! God designed it to be so. God designed our hearts to desire love that never ends...a love that is unconditional...a love that is pure and good!

If we were designed for this type of love, why do people often settle for less than the true happiness that God has planned?

***That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. ~Genesis 2:24:***

## Healthy Relationships & Healthy Marriages

Sadly, some people have been taught that they don't deserve good and pure love. Our world often teaches us an inaccurate meaning of love through the selfishness portrayed in TV shows, movies, music, magazines, and even sometimes by the way others treat us. When our hearts have been broken and disappointed, we begin to change. We begin to believe the lies that the world teaches. We begin to trust more in what the TV shows, movies, and magazines are saying about love and we slowly turn away from God's loving plan. We start to believe that what the world has to offer is somehow better and will make us happier.

But God never stops calling us to follow His plan! He never gives up on us! No matter what we have done or what has been done to us or how long we've turned from Him, He is *ALWAYS* awaiting our return with open arms! Why? So He can get His own way? No! He never gives up on us because He loves us and He wants us to experience the kind of love He designed for us...love that will bring true and authentic happiness and joy to our lives...love that will lead us to spend eternity with Him in Heaven!



***Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. ~1 John 4: 7-8***

You probably already know that love is often distorted in our world. Some people choose to live and act contrary (opposite) to God's plan by the way they treat others. Sometimes people will say they love someone and pretend to be kind to them but in reality they are treating the other person as an object for their own selfish pleasure. This is not part of God's plan and we always deserve better than being treated like an object! We deserve the joy and happiness that comes with living according to God's plan.

Remember in the last chapters how we talked about the differences of love and lust and God's design for love, marriage and sex? We've come to realize that not everyone knows about God's plan or maybe they've decided to follow their own selfish ways instead of God's ways. When others make decisions that turn away from God, we can sometimes be hurt by their choices. We can be hurt in a variety of ways...some more serious than others. One of the most important things to remember is that if someone else does something to hurt you...sexually, physically or emotionally...you are never to blame! You have done nothing wrong! No matter what they try to tell you or how they try to convince themselves, or you, that what they did was right, you *know* right from wrong! If someone is hurting you in any way, please tell a trusted adult immediately. If they don't believe you or don't listen right away, tell another trusted adult and keep telling them until they listen and do something to help you. You have absolutely nothing at all to be ashamed of if someone else is taking advantage of you. Any type of abuse is a horrible crime...not only according to state and federal laws but especially according to God's laws. God does not want you to be hurt...that is *never ever* part of His plan! Abuse to the human person makes God



hurt too so remember that He has placed good and loving people in your lives to ensure your safety and care. Go to them so they can help you! Never ever stay with someone who hurts you...in any way! You deserve hope, healing, and authentic love...not fake love that only seeks to hurt and destroy God's plan. Regardless of what others have done to hurt us in the past, we can still experience healing and authentic love by staying close to God and by doing our best to follow His plan for life, love and marriage.

Holy marriage is a vocation. God knew that marriage was SO important and SO crucial to our society that He elevated it to a sacrament. It's not just a legal contract uniting a man and a woman, but it's a sacrament that unites a man and woman according to God's plan.

A vow is a sacred promise to live and act a certain way. In the case of marriage, the couple is promising to live according to God's plan for life, love, and marriage.

When a couple comes to the Catholic Church to be married, the priest or deacon asks them a series of questions before they exchange their vows.

1. ***(Name) and (Name), have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?***
2. ***Will you love and honor each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives?***
3. ***Will you accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and His Church?***

After the man and woman give their consent (by saying "I do") to the above questions, they exchange the following vows before God, the priest and/or deacon, and their family and friends. The couple may choose to use either of the following vows:

***I (insert name) take you (insert name) to be my wife/husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.***

***I (insert name) take you (insert name) for my lawful wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.***



Read the questions and vows again. Spend time thinking about each word and what it means. Think about some examples of how the vows may play out in everyday life (i.e. sickness/health, love/honor, good times/bad, love and honor *all* the days of my life).



**#20 A Forever Love: Pete & Therese**

Look back at the questions the priest/deacon asks the couple before they exchange vows. These questions indicate the four components in God's plan for marriage and sex.

1. **Free:** *Look back to question #1 during the marriage ceremony:* Each person must *freely* enter into the covenant and not be coerced by another person. Like Christ's love, our love must ALWAYS be freely given. Without freedom it is impossible to love. Therefore the only way for sex to be an act of love would be if it were freely given between husband and wife in a committed marriage. It can never be forced, paid for or given with conditions.
2. **Total:** *Look back to questions #1, 2, & 3.* Each person gives his or her *total* self to the other...fully...100%! Like Christ's love, our love must ALWAYS be total. When marriage and sex is an act of love, both persons give their entire selves with their mind, heart, body, soul, masculinity, femininity, potential fatherhood or potential motherhood. During sex, the language of the body says, "I give my *whole* self to you. I accept all that you are and I will love you forever." If ANY one of these things is missing, then it is not love...it is a lie. It is incomplete.
3. **Faithful:** *Look back to question #2.* Each spouse remains *faithful* to the other in word, thought and deed...until death. Our love like Christ's love must ALWAYS be faithful. We know that Christ never leaves us. He never strays from us...even when we sin. His love was faithful to the point of death on the cross for our salvation. Likewise, we must die to ourselves and die to selfishness. Sex can only be an act of love if the couple is faithful to one another in thought, word, and deed. Husband and wife are to offer their entire selves to the other person...as a gift. This is only possible if they offer that gift ONLY to one another.
4. **Fruitful:** *Look back to question #3:* Each person is open and willing to accept children into their marriage and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and His Church. Our love, like Christ's love, must ALWAYS bear fruit. Sex offers the couples the opportunity to be co-creators with God and to participate in the creations of a new person through their act of unitive love.

***When we follow God's plan for life, love, and marriage, ALL four of the components must exist. We don't pick and choose which one is convenient and which isn't...God's plan is a package deal. When we accept and do our best to follow His plan, God's grace will sustain us!***

Couples must respect the fact that sex offers us the power to create new life. Therefore, we must always be open to the gift of new life. If we are not open to the gift of life, then the act of sex cannot be fruitful and also does not spiritually unite the man and woman as God designed. For couples that are not open to the gift of life, sex becomes selfish instead of selfless.

Once you understand what the vows mean and once you understand the four components of marriage and sex, you begin to understand that marriage truly is a *sacred* covenant...one that is meant to reflect God's love in our world!

Saint John Paul II explained (in *Familiaris Consortio*) that marriage does three amazing things when it's lived according to God's design:

1. *A holy marriage shows God's total, undying love for the world. It doesn't have conditions but instead is a complete and generous gift! (Look up John 3:16)*
2. *A holy marriage shows Christ's love for the Church. Jesus offered the complete gift of Himself when He died on the cross for each of us. With Jesus' death came new life. When Jesus died, the Church was born to continue His life saving work here on earth! Jesus' death allows us the opportunity to live eternally with God in Heaven!*
3. *A holy marriage changes society for the better. When husband and wife love each other sacrificially and when they welcome children into their family, they are showing love like God loves us and like Christ loves the Church. Through the Sacrament of Marriage, the couple is showing Christ's love to the world while they themselves grow in holiness.*

In the Gospel of Mark, the evangelist remind us, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Mark 10:9) So how does a man and woman live up to these vows when things become difficult or stressful? What happens when the honeymoon is over and the issues of real life begin to settle in?



#### #21 What is Marriage: Jason Evert

***Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined. ~Matthew 7:24-27***



When a man and woman keep Christ at the center of their marriage, they are given the graces of the sacrament to help them overcome the difficulties that come their way. Like the Scripture passage states, you must build your lives on a solid foundation...that foundation is a life lived for Christ. It doesn't mean that you will never struggle or suffer or that sickness or hardship won't be a part of your life. It means that even in the midst of all the difficulties in life and in marriage, God will always give you exactly what you need exactly when you need it most! We just need to trust in Him and give Him permission to work in and through us...and that's the same for marriage couples!



They must remain close to God through prayer and sacraments and invite Him into their marriage to give them the grace to endure every moment, especially when it might be easier to turn the other way.

The notion of building your life on a firm foundation...on solid rock ...begins NOW! The way you live your life right now is preparing you for how you will live your life later...in whatever vocation God calls you to. By keeping Christ at the center of your life and putting Him first, we begin to discover God's plan for life, love and relationships.

If you play a sport, musical instrument or participate in an extra-curricular activity that involves a game, performance, or competition, you know that in order to do well and succeed then you must practice. You can't just show up to your soccer or baseball game and expect to do well if you haven't practiced. Even the professionals still practice daily.

The same goes for our spiritual life with God. If we don't practice living according to God's plan for life, love and relationships NOW then we can't expect things to go well later. God gives us the sacraments in order to help keep us holy. The sacraments, the Ten Commandments and the virtues are like a GPS that helps to keep us on track. We can't expect to live according to God's plan when we only participate in the sacraments once in a while...or when we only pay attention to a few of the Ten Commandments. Living a life of holiness is not easy...but neither is playing in a competition or a game! Each requires dedication, commitment, and hard work. But with holiness we have God's grace to help lead us, especially on those days when we haven't "practiced" enough...on those days when we may have fallen into sin instead of virtue.

Living a life of holiness and living according to God's plan for life, love, and marriage means that we know the truth about authentic love.

Authentic love doesn't use or abuse another person. Authentic love doesn't violate another person's dignity by using another person's body before or outside of marriage. Some people think that they have to live according to our world's standards in order to fit in or be "cool." God is calling us to a better way! God is calling us to fit into His world...to seek Heaven above all else!

When we date it is important to remember the very purpose of dating! Does anyone have any ideas of what dating is meant for?



**#22 Dating & the Road to Marriage: Collin & Meghan**

The real purpose of dating is to discover whom God wants you to marry! If God is calling you to marriage, then know that He has chosen your spouse for you from the moment of your very existence in your mother's womb! God has a plan for you! Now think about dates that either you've been on or other's you know have been on...are they honoring God's plan? When we date, are we keeping God at the center of our relationship? Or are we trying to fit in? Are we trying to be "cool" by saying we have a girlfriend or boyfriend? If you're not ready for marriage, then chances are you're not ready for dating. You don't have to date to be "cool" or to fit in...even though our world might be telling you otherwise! It is completely normal for guys and girls at your age (and older) to be just friends! Try it...just be friends with the opposite sex. Learn to hang out, talk, play sports, be silly, laugh together and pray together!

After all, this is "practicing" for what marriage is truly all about! Don't you want to be best friends with the one you're going to marry? If your answer is yes, then you have plenty of time to date later in high school, college and after college. There is no rush. You won't be seen as "uncool" or unpopular but instead you can focus on God's call and in doing so, God will lead you to the right person that He has just for you! Until then, don't settle for less. Don't compromise yourself by sharing your body with anyone except the one you're married to...til death do you part. Whether or not you are dating anyone now or will be in the future, dating is meant to help us discover what qualities we want in our future spouse. It is not a time to use each other selfishly and "test drive" each other as if we were new cars. Yes, you may have strong feelings and desires for another person when dating and you or your date may profess love for the other, but hold up! Remember... true, authentic God-like love will *never* take from you what belongs to your future spouse! True, authentic God-like love will never ask you to live together (cohabitate) before you're married. True love respects and honors your dignity and finds other fun and healthy ways to express love.

### ***Think of some healthy dating options that steer away from physical intimacy***

You are a gift to your families and to our world. Consider yourself as total gift to your future spouse. Remember what we talked about earlier...***your visible body expresses truth about your invisible soul***. How you act, how you speak, how you dress, and how you dance all influence the gift. When we dress modestly we are respecting ourselves enough to not share our bodies with the world because we know that God made our bodies sacred. We know that our visible body expresses truth about our invisible soul. When girls wear bikinis, low cut shirts, shirts that show off their womb (stomach), wear tight clothing, shorts or skirts that leave nothing to the imagination, what are we expressing to the world? Our bodies are sacred. They are a gift. They are not meant to be objects to be flaunted so that others will look at us or even so that others will like you or ask you out.



**#23 Chastity: Saying YES to Love! Collin & Meghan**



Do you really want to date a guy who is only interested in your body? That is not true and authentic love...it's lust. Ladies, have enough self-respect to dress modestly and don't be afraid that guys won't talk to you. Practice the virtue of modesty and the right guy, the one that God has chosen for you, will see your real beauty that goes *far* beyond your body!

Fast forward now to those who say that they're truly in love! We so often hear a person in love say that he or she is my soul mate that "completes me!" Whether it's in a movie or in a love song, the notion of a soul mate that completes you sounds really romantic and sweet! But think about what we talked about in the last chapter. Another person doesn't "complete you." God completes you! God created you whole, not in pieces or fractions! You can't expect to take part of yourself (50%, 60%, 75%) and commit to another person because that person deserves *all* of you...all 100%! Relationships, love, and marriage is not a 50/50 equation. It involves 100% of a person. Think of your favorite singer or sports player. If he/she only gave 50% of what they are capable of, chances are, their fans would be pretty upset with them! You expect that person to give 100% of who they are... realizing that this doesn't mean that the person is perfect or that in giving that 100%, that there will be a perfect result. We simply want to see the effort. It's the same with love and relationships. Would you stand at the altar on your wedding day and say, "I do" to a person who said, "I will love and honor you sometimes, when I feel like it." Or "I will love you only when you're healthy, pretty or handsome, rich, young, etc." Of course we wouldn't marry someone who isn't willing to commit 100% to our future because we know our hearts were made for true, authentic, unselfish love.



The bottom line is that we can't be perfect and we will make mistakes, but with God's help, He will complete the equation. When God is put first above everyone else, He completes us and allows us to give 100% to whatever it is that we are committed.



**#24 Christ-Centered Relationships: Collin & Meghan**

**#25 Role Models of Authentic Love: Collin & Meghan**

**#26 UPDATE! WE ARE MARRIED!! Collin & Meghan**

As we mentioned earlier, marriage is meant to reflect God's love in the world. Jesus said, "*Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.*" (Mark 16:15) Jesus commanded us to be witnesses of His love to the world! For the married couple, this is done by the way the spouses love one another and by the way they welcome, love and care for their children. Children learn how to love by watching their parents. One of the best things a father can do for his children is to love and respect their mother. It is in the family that the child first learns to be unselfish and to begin living for God and others instead of themselves. Just think you may be the only Gospel that someone reads!

It is within the bond of marriage that God intended for man and woman to express their total love for one another. Man and woman express God's love to the world by the marriage vows they live out on a daily basis.



They do this in many ways but one of the ways is through the marital act. God created sex (the marital act) to be an expression of love between husband and wife that bonds them together and allows them to participate in the creation of new life. The two purposes of marriage are *unity and procreation*...or bonding and babies. These two things cannot be separated or they no longer remain part of God's plan. God's plan is that through the marital act, the man and woman are bonded *and* are open to the possibility of new life...a child. It's

not one or the other...it's both/and.

God knew what He was doing when He created the sacrament of marriage to help protect one of the most sacred acts! When you engage in the sacred marital act your body is making a promise to the other person. You're not just having sex with a body...you're having sex with a soul. The sacrament of marriage "supplies" the graces necessary so that husband and wife unselfishly give of themselves to the other person.



#### **#27 God's Plan for Dating, Marriage & Parenthood: Brian & Siobhan**

If the marital act is about bonding and babies, how does the bonding occur? Remember how we talked about male and female complementarity? Man and woman were designed to fit together like two puzzle pieces...to complete God's plan for life, love, and relationships. In doing so, they are bonded to one another for life. This bonding happens due to a hormone called oxytocin. Oxytocin is a hormone that acts like Super Glue and is released when two people become intimately involved with one another. When a man and woman engage in the marital act, they are bonded ever more closely. During birth, that same hormone, oxytocin, is present which bonds a mother and child together in a very intimate way.

Oxytocin also helps explain why when people engage in the marital act outside of marriage (premarital sex) and then they breakup...it makes it extremely difficult. They have given something to the other person that was never theirs to begin with...and are now bonded like Super Glue. It becomes extremely heartbreaking and difficult to move on from that relationship. It is similar to a mother who is separated from her child.

***The vocation of marriage is a sacrament of communion and mission. ~CCC 1210-1211***

When one man and one woman enter into Holy Matrimony they become one with God and with each other. Their mission is to grow in holiness together and to be a sign of God's love to the world. The husband and wife have a duty to keep Christ at the center of their marriage so that their family can grow in holiness and reach Heaven. They do this by praying together and receiving the sacraments frequently. The grace they receive from the sacraments will help them during difficult times when they will need to sacrifice for the sake of each other or for their children.

In addition to the vocations of marriage, priesthood and consecrated life, some may be called to live in the single state. Living as a single person allows you a greater opportunity to serve God and one another. You can use this time to grow closer to Christ and hear where He is calling you to serve. Perhaps God is asking you to serve Him by working in a full time Church ministry to help others learn more about Him. Matthew Kelly says, "Singleness is a time in all of our lives for a reason. Some are single for a time. Others are called by God to singleness as a way of life. Regardless, don't waste your precious single years. You will never have a better opportunity to serve [God and His Church] than when you are single!"

## Family as the First Church

Have you ever thought of your family as a "mini-Church?" The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that when a man and woman marry and welcome children into their marriage, they are replicating God's love for the Church. Every child comes from one father and one mother. As a member of a family, a child is taught the basic values of how to get along in that family as well as the larger society. The family is like a child's first school where we learn how to live in relationship to one another.

As members of a family we learn to respect, to love, and to treat one another responsibly even when we sometimes do not get along or when we argue and disagree with one another. We first learn these values within the family structure but these important values form a foundation upon which we learn how to interact and treat one another throughout our entire lives.

The family unit is irreplaceable. It is the basic core of human society that teaches us how to live, love, and be Christ to one another. Sometimes we don't always get along with our family members. Parents may argue, siblings argue or children don't agree with their parents' decisions and vice-versa. Yet we are still called to respect and love one another just as Jesus did. Jesus taught us this best in the ways He showed kindness and love toward those that were often mocked, made fun of, or disliked. Jesus Himself was even mocked, made fun of and crucified on a cross. Even in those moments, He still showed us how to love. Recall His words from the cross: **"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."** (Luke 23:34) We learn to be loving and respectful by looking to how God loves His Church.



Parents are called to raise and teach their children about the faith. They do this by acting like a "miniature Church" in the ways they reflect God's love by the way they act, speak and treat one another and in the ways they treat their children. Remember, ideally marriage is meant to give glory to God and show the world a small taste of what our relationship with God will be like in Heaven. Children learn how to act, how to speak, how to love and how to respect others by watching their parents. (CCC 1655-57, 2201-2208, 2249)



Sadly sometimes our families may seem broken due to the experience of divorce or an absent parent. It is not for us to judge the reasons that have led to this brokenness and you are certainly not to blame. Although these situations can cause great pain and heartache, God continues to call us to do our best to reflect His love in whatever circumstances we are in...your family is still a “miniature-Church” and is called to show Christ’s love to our world! Regardless of the circumstances and the choices that the adults around you have made, God still has a very special plan for your life!



As a family, we gain strength to bring Christ's light and love to the world by staying close to God in prayer and by attending Mass and receiving the Eucharist every Sunday. When we do these things as a family, our families grow stronger and stronger! Through the Sacraments, we receive God's grace to help us to choose good over evil, to choose love over hate, and to act as a "miniature Church," always portraying God's love for the world to see!

It is important to remember that even though not all families are created the way God intended, each person has unique dignity because he or she is created in the image and likeness of God and is worthy of love and respect. No matter how a child is conceived, each and every child, from the moment of conception is a unique, unrepeatable masterpiece created by God to be loved, honored, and cherished!

According to God’s plan for marriage and family, God intends that each child be raised by a loving and faithful mother and a father. In some instances, a child is conceived to parents who cannot properly care for their child. These parents are faced with difficult decisions to ensure that their child is raised in a loving home and is given the opportunity to live a good life. Parents who cannot properly care for their child can make the generous, yet difficult choice, of placing their child in a loving and faithful adoptive family. This generosity and love comes from the understanding that the mother and father are not “giving their child away” but instead are giving their child a life that they have always dreamt of and unfortunately are not able to provide for them.



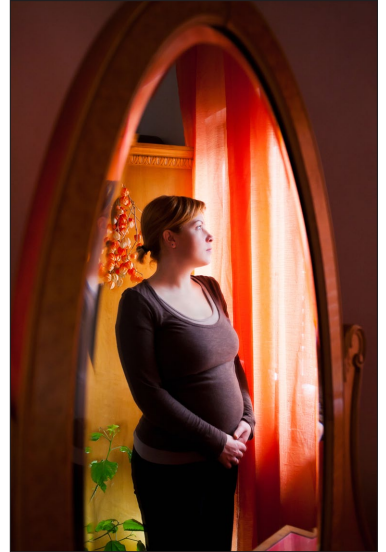
## #28 Adoption: A Gift of Love: Paula

Understanding and following God's plan is not always easy. Birthparents are encouraged to spend a lot of time praying and thinking about the choice that is best for their child. Placing a child for adoption is a heroic act of love on behalf of the birth parents. They are freely choosing to sacrifice their own desires, feelings and even fears for the sake of their child. It is important to understand that this is a sacred decision that should not be taken lightly. With the help of God's grace,



and supportive counseling, a mom and dad are able to make a loving choice to place their child with an adoptive family who will be able to provide for their child in ways that they have always imagined.

The Catholic Church and the Bishops have vowed to support and assist those in the adoption process and to ensure that the process maintains the dignity of all involved. The Bishops agree that adoption is, “a gift to the child who receives a new family, to the new parents who receive a child to love and to raise, and to the biological parents who, in self-sacrificing love, have done all they can to provide their son or daughter with a good home and a bright future.”



#### **#29 Trusting God's Plan for Families: Kevin & Rose Maria**

# FREEDOM & HAPPINESS

## License vs. Freedom

How many of you can't wait to get your driver's license? In a few short years, many of you will have achieved that goal. Discuss reasons why you look forward to getting your driver's license (i.e. greater independence, etc.).

But think about it...just because you have your driver's license, doesn't mean you have the freedom to go *wherever* you please, *whenever* you please, with *whomever* you please. Your parent(s) still has rules you must



abide by and so does the state. For instance, in many states, new drivers are not allowed to drive beyond a certain hour at night and they are not allowed to drive with friends in the car until they reach a certain age. You also must wear your seatbelt at all times and never use a cell phone or text when driving. These rules, put in place by the state, are there for your safety and wellbeing. Your parent(s) most likely will have additional guidelines that you need to follow. Again, these are in place for your safety and wellbeing. Sometimes it may seem like you're being "smothered" by rules...at school, at home, by the state, and even by the Church. But think for a minute about these "rules." If you begin to understand why they are in place, you begin to understand that when following the rules, it actually brings you more freedom!



You see, there is a difference between freedom and license. License is the permission to do something (i.e. drive) but freedom allows us the ability to choose what we *ought* to do, not just do what we *want* to do. If we all did whatever we *wanted* to do, our world would be in chaos. For instance, if you decided that you didn't feel like stopping at the red light, there is a very good chance that you could crash into another car and hurt yourself or

someone else. Even if you didn't cause an accident, a police officer would most likely pull you over and give you a ticket. If you repeatedly break the rules of the road, you could lose your license to drive and even spend time in jail. You have the "license" or choice to disobey the law, but your freedom would be taken away.



**#30 Freedom vs. License: Fr. Matt Williams**

The same is true with God's plan for life, love and relationships. Often times we hear people say that the Church is just full of old-fashioned "rules!" However, God's plan goes way beyond a "bunch of rules." We have

the freedom to choose to follow God or not. God is always a gentleman and never forces us to do anything we don't want to do. God's loving plan is simply an invitation to learn the truth about ourselves and others.

After all, who knows more about us than the One that created us and brought us into being? Read the parable of the rich young man in Matthew 19:16-22

In the parable, the rich young man had the freedom to choose, but freedom alone did not make him happy. He went away sad because he made a bad choice. He chose material possessions over God.

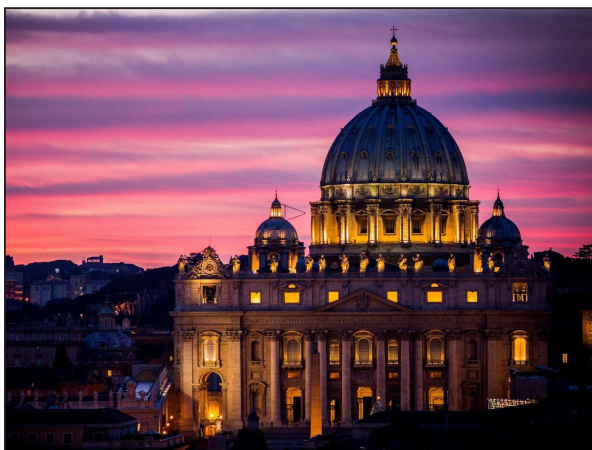
God offers us a plan that He devised for our greatest good...a plan that is sure to bring us happiness and peace in this life and the next. Like we said earlier, you have the freedom to love God or to turn from God. The choice is entirely yours.

Consider St. Augustine, who as a young man, strayed from God for many years. He was leading a sinful life and eventually had an awakening and turned back to God. One of his most famous quotes is one where he speaks from his own experience. "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O Lord." St. Augustine tried to live his life differently than what God had planned. He thought he knew best so he went about doing sinful things and discovered that he wasn't happy at all...instead, he was miserable, lonely and sad. When he turned back to God the Father and began to lead a life of virtue, he found true happiness, joy, and peace. Choosing anything less than God, makes us less free to follow the truth. And the truth helps us to know what we ought to do.

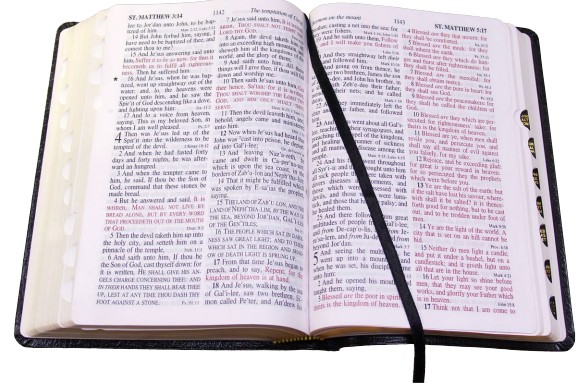
When we decide to follow God, we choose love. We choose love for God, others, and ourselves. In caring for our body and soul, we are saying "yes" to God's plan for our lives. We care for our body and soul by forming our conscience. Our conscience is the deep place within us where we are alone with God. Conscience is that interior place in our hearts where we make decisions based upon truth and not what everyone else is doing (peer pressure). By forming our conscience and living according to God's plan, we discover true freedom!

## Caring for Body & Soul

Caring for our body and soul and developing our conscience is a big responsibility. When we follow our conscience we don't base our decisions on feelings alone. If we make choices based on our feelings we will most



certainly be left disappointed because our feelings can constantly change. But God's Truth *never* changes. Forming our conscience is a life long task. You don't just wake up one morning and say, "Oh, today's going to be a good day, because I *finally* formed my conscience!" No, each day is a day where we decide to say "YES!" to God's plan or yes to our own plan. Each day is an opportunity to start new! The best way to form (and keep informing) your conscience about what is right and what is wrong is by consulting reliable sources. One of the most reliable sources for forming our consciences correctly is the Catholic Church.





Jesus Himself gave the apostles and their successors, the bishops, the authority and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to teach Truth in His name. This means that God's plan for life, love, relationships, and marriage is revealed to us through the Church's teachings.

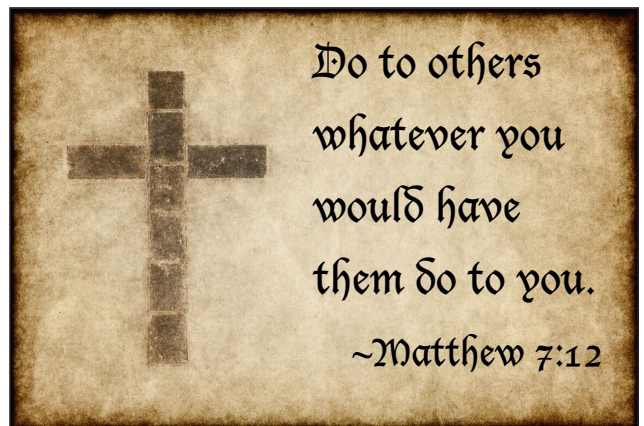
Consider the Fifth & Sixth Commandments. The Fifth Commandment states that, "You shall not kill." This commandment seems pretty straight forward, right? Then why do so many people willingly break this commandment? Every time we turn on the news, we hear stories of people getting mistreated, attacked and even killed. This happens because some people in our world have lost proper respect for the dignity of the human person. They do not understand that each and every person is created in the image and likeness of God and should be treated as such.

If we take a moment to look into another person's eyes and actually see Christ in them, how could we possibly say or do something mean to that person? How could we bully or make fun of another person if we take the time to see Christ in him/her? Instead we are often blinded by jealousy, fear, anger or any number of feelings. But remember, we don't make decisions based on our feelings because our feelings can change. We must make decisions based on objective truth because objective truth never changes. God created each of us for a special purpose and He expects us to speak, act and live with dignity while respecting ourselves and every human person.

Have you ever heard of the Golden Rule? "Treat others, as you want to be treated." We should always keep that in mind when dealing with others...especially if we're having difficulty being kind to another person.

We have talked about how God has a special purpose for our lives and how if we follow His call, it will lead to authentic happiness and peace.

But did you know that God has a plan for your life from the moment your life begins!? Science tells us that all human life begins at conception...when a child is conceived in his/her mother's womb. *All* human life is sacred at *every* stage. The fifth commandment tells us that we should never participate in anything that frustrates or disrupts God's design. If we are not treating every human life with the utmost dignity and respect at all times, then we are violating the Fifth Com-



mandment. Of course, this means that we don't kill another human person, but it also means that we don't hurt them, make fun of them, gossip, disrespect or bully them in any way!

One of the biggest offenses against the Fifth Commandment is the tragic loss of human life through abortion. Abortion is the intentional taking of the life of an unborn baby before he/she is born. More than one million abortions are performed every year in the United States. Usually when a woman becomes pregnant, it is cause for great rejoicing and celebration and she gets quite excited to share the news that she is having a baby. Her family and friends typically celebrate the baby by hosting



a baby shower or decorating the baby's bedroom. Sometimes, a woman may be surprised or afraid when she discovers that she is pregnant and going to have a baby. Perhaps she is very young, still in school, not married and she may be fearful of what her parent(s) or others would say if they found out she was having a baby. She may feel embarrassed by her pregnancy if she conceived her child outside of marriage...outside of God's plan.



Perhaps she doesn't feel ready to be a mom or perhaps she fears that financially she cannot afford to care for her child. Maybe she feels that having a child will interfere with the plans she had for her own life. Although all of these circumstances and feelings are very real and understandable, it is very important for her to take a step back and think about what is happening. She may be overwhelmed with emotions and she may have many people telling her what she should and should not do.

Some people closest to her (parent, boyfriend/husband, sibling or friend) may try to persuade her to end the pregnancy through abortion so that she can continue to live out her life as she had previously planned. This is the time that she needs to spend some quiet time with God in prayer. When she takes a step back and allows God to enter this experience with her, hopefully she will realize that even though she didn't plan to have a baby or perhaps doesn't feel ready, that our loving and merciful God will be with her every step of the way.

The world often tries to convince us that there is only one option...there is only one way out of this kind of "problem" and that is by "terminating the pregnancy." It is legal to abort a child in the United States and in many countries throughout the world. But be careful. ***What is legal and even what is popular is not always moral or right.*** Sadly, when civil laws are constructed, God's plan for life is not usually taken into consideration.

Having a baby isn't a "problem" and "terminating a pregnancy" is actually ending a human life. From the moment of conception, a child is FULLY human, and simply needs time to grow and be nurtured so he/she can be ready to enter the world. Just like a newborn baby and a growing child need to be cared for (fed, loved, sheltered), the unborn baby needs and deserves the same.



### #31 The Miracle of Life: Catholic Media House

Pray, trust and believe that God always has a plan...even when things seem too difficult to bear. God's plan *always* involves life and love and never destruction and despair. Abortion ends a child's life and changes a mother's life forever. *There is always another option and we should never make such a big decision based on fear, on feelings or based on what someone else is trying to convince us to do.* Your life and your child's life is far too precious and sacred to purposely make a decision to end it.

There are places you can go and people who will help you...even if everyone around you (parent, boyfriend, husband, etc.) is trying to convince you to do otherwise. *The most important thing to remember is that you are*

*never alone!* Our Church offers help through the *Pregnancy Help Office* that has specially trained people willing to help you and your baby! They offer *completely confidential* help by way of referrals for medical care, financial support, adoption information, counseling and the ongoing support that you and your baby deserve during your pregnancy and even after your child is born.



Having a child will certainly require sacrifice and may change your future plans, but change isn't always a bad thing...it can be a blessing in disguise. A child can bring much joy into the world and can always change our world for the better when embraced and loved the way God intended. If desired, you can continue your education and achieve your hopes and dreams, but with different timing and in a different way than you may have originally intended. Every child is gift from God and He asks us to receive His gifts with grace and treat His children with dignity and respect.



Sadly, sometimes even doctors may try to convince parent(s) to choose abortion for their child. Maybe medical tests might lead them to believe that the baby is going to be born with a disability or not be able to function exactly the way other people do. An important thing to remember is that sometimes these medical tests can be wrong...in more ways than we can imagine.

Take for instance, the case of little Julia who was born with Down Syndrome. Julia is a beautiful, intelligent, loving and sweet baby girl. Although her parents didn't know their baby was going to be born with Down Syndrome, they couldn't imagine life without

her! Thankfully God gave Julia such a loving family to care for her and help her to grow! She is already making the world a more beautiful place with her big beautiful smile and infectious laugh!



**#32 Respect for Every Human Life: Katie & Julia**

**#33 God Gives Us What We Need: The Kiley Family**

Having a child with health issues is certainly not what any parent desires, but seeing every human life as a gift, regardless of the challenges, is exactly what brings joy to our lives! Look at Julia's family...they have their challenges but they love her unconditionally and know that the gift of Julia's love and beauty can change our world for the better! Very sadly, 90% of the time preborn babies like Julia are diagnosed with Down Syndrome, they are aborted before their parent(s) ever truly understood the gift that their child would have been to their families and to our world.

Do you remember the video clip from Paula, the local high school student who was adopted? She is grateful to her birth parent(s) every day because they chose life! Certainly it wasn't an easy situation for her birth parent(s)



but look at the beautiful young woman Paula has turned out to be! Her birthmother deserves a lot of credit for that! Without her heroic choice to place her daughter with a loving, adoptive family, the world may not have known such a beautiful person! Adoption is always a beautiful, loving alternative to abortion.

Remember, God calls us to life and love and whatever the circumstances that lie before us He promises to be by our side to help us through every situation and God's promises never fail! Even when the circumstances don't appear to be ideal, there is always hope!

God is calling each of us to make the unselfish choice to embrace, protect and love life...at all stages...from conception until natural death. This includes how we embrace the lives of those who are sick, disabled, elderly, dying, and all those who the world may consider not worthy of our love and resources. God reminds us that *every* human life is worthy of love, respect, and protection. Trust Him and trust His plan!

*The LORD says, 'I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.' ~Psalm 32:8*

The Sixth Commandment, "You shall not commit adultery" reminds us to be faithful to God's plan for marriage. As we previously talked about, marriage is meant to last a lifetime...til death do you part. Sometimes, selfishness takes over and can lead people to disobey the 6th commandment. Adultery is when a married man or married woman chooses to be unfaithful to their marriage vows and have sex with someone who is not their spouse. Our world typically refers to this as "cheating" on your spouse or having an "affair." Obviously this is a disruption of God's great plan for marriage. It is not at all what God intended.



#### #34 Teens Talk: Sex is a Gift from God

God's plan is designed so that the couple spends their entire lives together being faithful and monogamous (having only one sexual partner in marriage). God has this plan in place to secure our happiness and the well being of family life and society. God knows that stable marriages and families contribute to our society in a positive way and make the world a better place.

Sometimes, lust enters into people's lives and can frustrate God's design. Remember that the things you do now are preparing you for your future vocation! So practice virtue, not lust. This includes not participating in things like "sexting"—texting/sending inappropriate pictures of yourself or someone else. This also includes





not dressing or dancing inappropriately, not watching TV shows, movies, video games or listening to music that objectify the human person. There are so many influences in our world that tempt us to turn from God's plan. Using our body or another person's body for lust or pleasure is *not* part of God's design and lead to great brokenness and unhappiness in our world.

God's plan for sex in marriage is an opportunity for husband and wife to give of their whole selves to one another completely. However, if a couple has sex, but they are not open to new life, then the sexual act is not *total* or *fruitful*. If a couple uses contraception, then they are both denying new life and holding back a part of themselves, which is their potential motherhood and fatherhood—their fertility. Through sex the body speaks a language, and it says, "I give my whole self forever. I hold nothing back, and I accept all that you are." If the couple contracepts, then their bodies are telling a lie because they are not giving their entire selves, and they are not accepting the potential motherhood or fatherhood of the other person. The marital act must always intend to express love *and* be open to new life. Using contraception violates *both* purposes of sex... bonding and babies.



**#35 Teens Talk: Sex is for Marriage**

**#36 Modesty Respects Your Beauty & Dignity: Daughters of Mary of Nazareth**

That doesn't mean that every couple has to have many children. It is important for couples to be responsible for each child they conceive. So how does a couple avoid having more children than they can be responsible for without using birth control? The Church offers a solution called Natural Family Planning (NFP). NFP uses the woman's monthly fertility cycle to determine when she is most likely to conceive a child and when she is not likely to conceive. While remaining open to God's plan and using their own self-control, couples can work with the natural cycles of a woman's body to determine the number of children they have and to space out births. An important thing to know about artificial birth control is that the chemicals taken by the woman are meant to work against her natural cycles while NFP naturally works with them.

The use of artificial contraception to prevent pregnancy and the use of "protection" such as condoms and other devices used to try to prevent disease simply make it possible for a couple to have selfish sex instead of having free, total, faithful, and fruitful relations as God has planned!

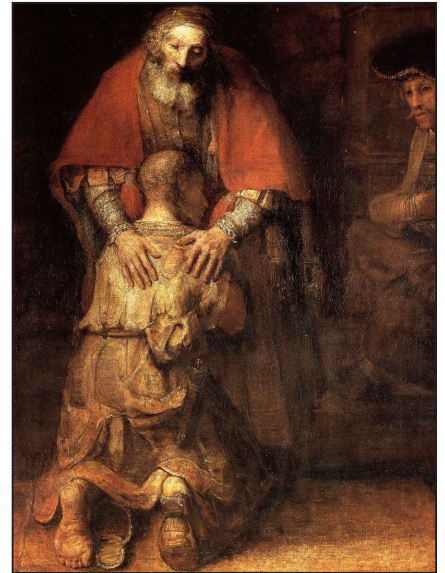
When you truly love another person, you will wait for them until marriage. When you truly love someone, you don't need to "protect" yourself from them! You protect yourself from enemies and people that want to cause you harm...not people that love you! Authentic God-like love, gives. It never takes.

Pornography (the exploitation of the human body for sexual pleasure) is a horrible and sinful way that *completely* disrespects the human person in every way possible. When a person looks at pornography, they are not

looking at a person's soul. Instead they are selfishly looking at a human person simply for what they have to offer on the "outside." They are treating the human person like an object and completely disregarding the dignity with which God created the person. Sadly, a lot of young people, unmarried and even married people become addicted to pornography. Once they start viewing pornographic images, it can become difficult to stop. Pornography is sinful and harms our relationship with God and convinces us to disrespect the human person, which is a violation of the Fifth Commandment and can lead to a violation of the Sixth Commandment. Be a better man. Be a better woman. Always defend the dignity of the human person and don't get caught up in worldly desires that frustrate God's plan. It only leads to unhappiness, broken families and disorder in our world. God created you for better! He created you for more! He created you to become a Saint! Care for your body and treat it like a temple! Care for your soul and in doing so lead yourself and others to Heaven!

We have talked about a lot of issues and some topics that may leave your heart a little "heavy." Perhaps some of these issues relate to your lives and either choices you have made or choices that those you love have made. But please don't feel badly...please don't be sad or fearful. God never abandons us and He wants more than anything for us to turn to Him...even if we had turned away from Him in the past! No matter where you've been, no matter what you've done or had done to you, *ALL* that matters is where you go from here!

The beauty of our Heavenly Father is that He remains loving and true even if we stray from Him. He awaits us with open arms. **Read the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Luke 15:11-32.** Just as the Prodigal Son's father welcomed him home with open arms, so does Our Father, Our Lord, Our Savior. God is *ALL* loving and merciful!



We mustn't forget to care for our soul the way we are taught to care for our bodies. We are taught to eat healthy foods and stay in shape by exercising our bodies. But what are you doing to care for your soul? Our Church offers us so many great ways to ensure our souls are healthy too! Remember, what we do with our bodies affects our souls and how we care for our souls also affects our bodies!



**#37 You are Worthy of Love: Jason Evert**

## God's Love & Mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation

We have talked a lot about some of the beautiful sacraments (Eucharist, Holy Orders and Marriage) that our Lord offers to us. One of the most important sacraments we can take advantage of is the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession/Penance). In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God forgives us of our sins so that we can begin anew! "God writes straight with crooked lines." God loved us enough to send His only Son into the world to suffer and die for us so that we could have the opportunity to live eternally with Him in Heaven. Even though Christ

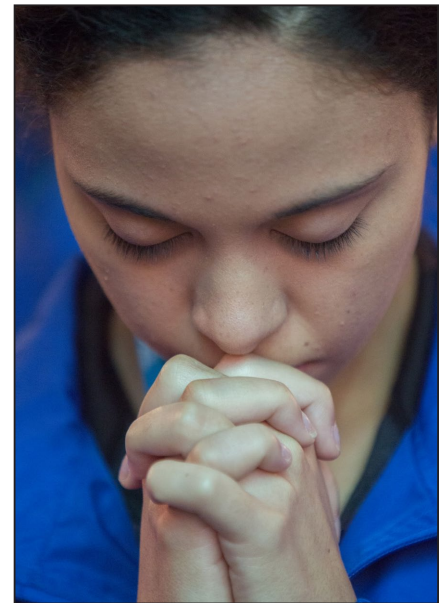


suffered and died, He still didn't leave us in this world alone. He gave us the sacraments, the Church and the holy priesthood to help us to grow in holiness; to help us grow closer to Him.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the priest acts *in persona Christi* or in the "person of Christ" and offers us God's forgiveness and absolves us of our sins. The Lord simply asks that we come to Him in the sacrament with humble hearts to confess our sins and to do penance. Penance allows us the opportunity to repent of our sins through prayer and/or action. Of course, any time we admit that we have done something wrong

it can cause us to be embarrassed or even make us nervous, but be not afraid. We never need to be fearful of God's love and mercy. He offers it to us freely and without reservation because He loves us *that* much!

A priest can reassure you that he will keep your confession completely confidential since that is one of the duties of his priesthood. He is never allowed to break the seal of confession by disclosing sins confessed during the Sacrament. There are specific Church laws (Code of Canon Law) that prohibit a priest from revealing any information shared between a priest and a confessor (the person confessing his/her sins). The priest is there to represent Christ in a non-judgmental, loving way. You will have an opportunity to pray together with the priest and he may offer you advice and particular ways to grow in holiness so that you can avoid those particular sins in the future. The reality is, we are all human and sin is part of the human condition. However, this should not cause us to give up or just accept that we are destined to do wrong things. No, instead we should always strive to be close to God and His plan! We should always strive to be Saints! Will we fall short from time to time? Of course we will.



It is at these times, that we should RUN, not walk, to the most beautiful Sacrament of Reconciliation! Don't wait weeks, months, or even years! The sacrament is available to you *anytime* you need it and as *often* as you need it! And if you're like most human beings, then that is quite often! It is a good habit to make regular monthly confessions. This will help you grow closer to Christ, to better understand His plan for your life and to better live out God's beautiful vocation. It will most certainly lead you closer to sainthood!

Remember that saints were sinners too...but they changed their ways by putting their selfishness aside and seeking God first. They sought out Jesus and allowed Him to transform their lives by forgiving them of their sins and wiping their hearts clean so they could be free to love Him, love others and love themselves as God created us!



**#38 God's Endless Love & Mercy: Jackie**



## Inspired to Discern & Answer God's Call

Now that you have learned more about God's plan for life, love, relationships and marriage, you have an important job! Learning about God's loving plan doesn't end here! It actually just begins! You are invited on a wonderful journey, full of ups and downs, but one that is guaranteed to bring you more joy and love than your heart can imagine! You were created by love, for love, to give love! So pray often, love like God loves and be holy like the saints!

You are now invited to commit to living according to God's plan for life, love, relationships and marriage by participating in the *Created for Love* commitment ceremony with your classmates. Perhaps your teacher may want to invite your parish priest and your parents to be present for this special occasion. Ladies you are encouraged to go out and buy a white candle as a sign of your commitment to save yourself until marriage. Remember that your purity is a beautiful gift from God. Do not light this candle until you present it to your husband on your wedding night, as a symbol of your sacrificial love for him. Gentlemen, honor the love and commitment your female friends have made and do the same in thought, word and deed. Be a strong man of God who seeks to love authentically the way God intended.



### #39 God's Plan Brings Happiness: Kevin



### Bonus Video Clips

**Teens Talk: Desire for Love is Normal**

**Teens Talk: Respecting Life & God's Plan**

**Q & A with Jason Evert**

**Modesty: Inviting Others to Value You in Proper Order**

**Dating: What's the Rush?!**

**Identity: Everyone Is Loved by God & His Church**

**For Girls: Inviting Boys To Treat Me With Respect**

**For Girls: Your Heart Deserves Beautiful & Healthy Relationships**

**For Girls: Dressing Appropriately—Be A Good Example!**

**For Girls: Standards—Raise the Bar!**

**Please also visit [www.RespectLifeEducation.com](http://www.RespectLifeEducation.com) for more videos and resources for students, teachers and parents.**

## Created for Love Commitment Ceremony

**Leader:** Heavenly Father, we thank you for the opportunity to come together and learn about the gift of Your great love for us. Help us to know and follow your plan for our lives and to keep your commands, knowing that they are given to us out of love to help us to grow in holiness and live a happy life. You know us better than we know ourselves and You know better than we do what will make us truly and authentically happy. We trust that in following Your plan, it will lead us to eternal life! Give us the grace to trust in Your great mercy when we fail to follow Your path, and remind us always of the great dignity you have bestowed on every human life.

**Leader:** Heavenly Father, we commit ourselves to You today. We give You all that we are and ask that You help us to remain strong in our pursuit of the truth.

**All:** Heavenly Father, thank you for creating me in Your image and for giving me immeasurable worth. Please give me the grace to grow in holiness by keeping my heart pure, so that I can love as I was meant to love. Trusting in your great mercy, give me the strength to reconcile with You when I fall and to be open to Your plan for my life, always remembering that Your plan will bring true happiness. Amen.

***For those who desire to follow God's plan for life, love, relationships, and marriage, by making a solemn commitment, please read aloud the following promise.***

**From this day forward, I will seek to follow God's plan for life, love, relationships, and marriage. I will seek God's help to keep my heart, mind, and body pure by saving the gift of my sexuality for my future spouse or to make a gift of myself in the vocation to which God calls me. I will do my best to live a virtuous life, knowing that all I see, hear, say, and do should reflect the love of God and dignity of every human person. I will respect and protect all human life, especially those who cannot protect themselves. If I struggle or fail, I will trust in God's mercy and try again.**

**Leader:** Lord, bless these young men and women, and help them grow in the gift of Your Love and Truth each day. We ask these things in Your name. Amen!