



Parent Information Session

Introduction

If you are preparing to lead a group of students through the *Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School* program, it is highly recommended that you conduct a Parent Information Session.

The purpose of the session:

- To educate parents about St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body
- To introduce them to the program that their sons and daughters will be studying
- To encourage them to take seriously their role as the primary educators in matters of faith and morals
- To empower them to talk with their children about the true meaning of their sexuality

This guide will assist you in conducting a Parent Information Session. In it you will find the following:

- A list of things to consider prior to, during, and after the Parent Information Session
- Tips for helping parents create a Theology of the Body culture in their homes
- Resources for further study
- Letter templates for communicating with parents

Ideally, the same instructor(s) who will be teaching the *Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School* program will also facilitate (or at least introduce themselves at) the Parent Information Session. This will provide optimum continuity and recognition between the instructors and the parents.

Preparing for the Parent Information Session

Conduct the Parent Information Session prior to teaching the *Envision* program.

1. Use the letter templates found at the end of this document to announce your meeting to parents.
2. Allow approximately ninety minutes for the session.
3. Consider offering refreshments.
4. Prepare to show the Parent Video. It is 11 minutes long and can be played either through our digital platform on Thinkific or by using a DVD player. You will need a suitable setup and a screen large enough for parents to see.
5. Prepare to distribute the *Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School* Parent's Guide (one per family). We recommend that you familiarize yourself with the content of the Parent's Guide before the session.
6. Familiarize yourself with the *Envision* Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). It contains commonly asked questions about the program. This document is available under Leader's Resources at AscensionPress.com/Envision.
7. Familiarize yourself with the Guide to Sensitive Topics. Although written for your instruction with the youth, some parents may have similar theological comments and/or questions. This document is a wonderful resource, offering helpful advice and excellent answers to the theological and moral questions that may arise during your parent meeting. Both this guide and the FAQs are available as free downloads at AscensionPress.com/Envision and are included in your leader access on Thinkific.
8. In addition to the main teaching content, the program provides five "Tough Topics" videos that discuss sensitive subjects. These videos are not mentioned in the student materials. The videos present faithful Catholic teaching with attention and sensitivity to middle school-aged students. The topics addressed by the videos are (1) body image, (2) gender, (3) homosexuality (same-sex attraction), (4) contraception, and (5) masturbation and pornography.

If you plan to show one or more of these videos during the session, be ready to assure parents that they have the option to opt out. You will send home a permission slip and letter prior to showing them.

During the Parent Information Session

1. Take attendance. (Follow up with parents who do not attend; resources for contacting those who were absent are provided on page 6.)
2. As an introduction, explain that the purpose of the meeting is to learn about the new *Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School* program.
3. Show the *Envision* trailer. This will give parents a quick overview of the program and get them excited about having their children participate.
4. Tell them that a Parent Information Session is offered as part of this curriculum for several reasons (read the below points aloud to parents):
 - The Church recognizes and acknowledges that parents are the primary educators of their children in matters of faith and morals, virtue, and love in their relationships with God and others.
 - Because of the sensitive content of the material, it is important for parents to understand the context in which sexuality is being presented (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1632; Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 49; and the Pontifical Council for the Family document "The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family").

Encourage parents to engage their children in meaningful conversation regarding the curriculum as it pertains to their lives. The Parent's Guide they will receive later in the session will greatly help with this communication.

5. Tell the parents that they will view a video that features Fr. Mike Schmitz (along with Brian Butler, Aimee MacIver, and Colin MacIver) explaining the curriculum and providing an overview of the entire program. Show the Parent Video.
6. After the video, distribute copies of the Parent's Guide, one per family. Point out the format of the booklet and select a chapter to show an example of the lesson summary and question and answer segment. Explain that these sections are meant to foster discussion of the material and strengthen family bonds.
7. Explain to the parents your overall plans, including the timing and format, for teaching the program to their middle schoolers. Mention that their sons and daughters will be told that their parents have attended an information meeting and have received the Parent's Guide. (Be sure to tell your students during the first lesson!)
8. If you plan to cover one or more of the sensitive subjects ("Tough Topics") during the program, remind parents they are the first educators of their child in every area, particularly when it

comes to education in love and human sexuality. You are here to support the formation they are providing at home. Explain what the topics are and assure parents that they can choose to opt out. You will send home a permission slip and letter prior to showing them in class.

Encourage parents to read the short video summaries and consider watching the videos on their own to help them decide whether they want their child to view the videos. Summaries and links to these videos can be found in the Leader Access of the Thinkific course.

Following the Parent Information Session

1. For those parents who did not attend the information session, use the template on page 6 to reach out via email or even by mail.
2. Some parents who did not attend the meeting may contact you with questions. If so, you may want to offer them an opportunity to watch the parent video.
3. If you plan to show one or more of the “Tough Topics” videos, send home the permission slip and parent letter well in advance of showing them in class. Encourage parents to read the short video summaries and watch the videos on their own to help them decide whether they want their child to view the videos. Summaries and links for parents, along with a letter and permission slip, can be found in the Leader Access of the Thinkific course. Make sure you receive written permission from each student’s parent or guardian and your pastor, your parish’s director of religious education (DRE), or the principal to show the videos.

Letter to Parents

The following two pages contain two templates that you can customize and send to the parents of your middle schoolers. The first one is to be used to invite parents to the *Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School Parent Information Session*, and the second one is to be used to send to parents who were unable to attend the Parent Information Session.

LETTER INVITING PARENTS TO THE PARENT INFO SESSION

Dear parents of [customize to fit your situation, e.g., “our middle school youth ministry,” “our Confirmation class,” “our eighth grade students”],

We are introducing an exciting new program called *Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School*. This curriculum is based on St. John Paul II’s Theology of the Body, which shares the truth about identity, purpose, and the gift and meaning of sexuality. It is our hope that this program will provide your child with the knowledge and understanding they need concerning the meaning and purpose of their identity, their sexuality, and their very existence.

Since parents are the primary educators of their children in matters of faith and morals, this program includes an integral parental component. To review the contents of *Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School* and learn more about the program, we invite you to attend a Parent Information Session on [add date/time] to be held at [location].

The meeting will inform you of the beautiful message we will be sharing with your child and offer you the tools and encouragement to confidently discuss these critical issues with them. At the Parent Information Session, you will receive an *Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School* Parent’s Guide. This excellent booklet summarizes the curriculum chapter by chapter, allowing you to follow along at home as your child goes through the program. The booklet also provides helpful questions and family applications to foster meaningful conversation at home.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation during this important stage of your child’s spiritual development. We look forward to seeing you at the Parent Information Session.

Sincerely,

[Name]

LETTER TO PARENTS WHO DID NOT ATTEND THE INFORMATION SESSION

Dear parents of [customize to fit your situation, e.g., “our middle school youth ministry,” “our Confirmation class,” “our eight grade students”],

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

The enclosed Parent Guide will inform you of the new program we are introducing to your child called *Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School*. This curriculum is based on St. John Paul II’s Theology of the Body, which shares the truth about the gift of sexuality as a good and essential part of love and life. It is our hope that this program will provide your child with the knowledge and understanding they need concerning the meaning and purpose of their identity, their sexuality, and their very existence.

Since parents are the primary educators of their children in matters of faith and morals, this curriculum includes an integrated parental component. The enclosed Parent’s Guide summarizes the contents of the new program chapter by chapter. It will inform you of the beautiful message we will be sharing with your child and offer you the tools and encouragement to confidently discuss these critical issues with them. Please note that the last pages of each chapter provide questions and family applications to foster meaningful conversation at home.

If you would like to learn more about the program, I can also share the video from the Parent Information Session with you; this video is a thorough explanation of the entire program presented by one of the program authors. You can also visit AscensionPress.com/Envision for more information.

We will begin teaching *Envision: Theology of the Body for Middle School* on [start date]. As we journey through *Envision*, we encourage you to follow along in the Parent’s Guide and take advantage of the opportunities to talk with your child about these important topics.

Thank you for your time and interest in this important stage of your child’s spiritual development. You are in our prayers.

Sincerely,

[Name]

“Tough Topics” Video Summaries for Parents

YOUR BODY, YOUR PERSONALITY, AND YOUR IDENTITY <https://youtu.be/AzctWfVbWNI>

In this video, Jason Evert discusses the deeper meaning of the body and what that means for those experiencing hurt or confusion, based on the Church’s response to gender ideology. He explains that each person has a body and soul made in the image and likeness of God, and we are called to glorify him.

YOUR ATTRACTIONS DON’T DEFINE YOU https://youtu.be/_JceP0kqsH8

In this video, Jason Evert explains the Church’s response to those experiencing same-sex attraction and how each and every one of us is a beloved child of God. Jason shows how we can respond positively and affirmatively to those who are unsure about what the Church’s teaching on homosexuality means for them.

LOVE AND NEW LIFE <https://youtu.be/VcyOzym2UV8>

In this video, Aimee MacIver discusses the Church’s teaching on contraception. She explains how contraception affects men and women, our culture, and our world.

FREEDOM FROM HARMFUL HABITS <https://youtu.be/ClqJaOfuTQE>

In this video, Colin MacIver reminds viewers that love is a gift of self. He discusses the harms of pornography and masturbation, both on the user and the world, and how they warp God’s design for love.

WHO YOU SEE IN THE MIRROR <https://youtu.be/Y5CCYGEIz4c>

In this video, Aimee MacIver discusses the deeply personal subject of body image. She shares her personal testimony and weaves in the truth the Church gives: that the body is good, and every person’s body is a gift to themselves and to the world.

More questions? Please contact us—we’d love to hear from you!

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