

A ONE-DAY RETREAT FORMAT

LEADER INTRODUCTION

If you have personally studied the Theology of the Body, you have an appreciation for its ability to transform lives. *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* uses dynamic, age-appropriate language to reach young Catholics—perhaps better than any other catechesis on human sexuality and relationships. Introducing teens to this extraordinary teaching through a retreat format is yet another great opportunity for youth evangelization.

This Retreat Guide will help you adapt content from the *Middle School Edition* to create a solid one-day retreat experience to jump-start your program. While not intended to offer the entire *TOB for Teens* program, this Retreat Guide *is* designed to allow introduction of foundational TOB concepts, based on the first three chapters of the *Middle School Edition* and the needs of your particular group. This will help to build a solid foundation upon which you can introduce the complete program at a later time—hopefully, soon after your retreat.

How are TOB principles integrated into a retreat for teens?

As human beings, we are an integrated union of body and soul. We are not pure spirits, like the angels; we are *incarnate* beings. This is both the teaching of the Theology of the Body and the traditional teaching of the Church. Because of this, our ministry needs to appeal to both body and soul. Our retreats need to be formative in the faith, and also emotionally, spiritually, and physically uplifting: They should be fun! Knowing the struggles of young people in today's world while giving them a retreat with the freedom and redemption found in this message can be a life-changing experience.

Each group is different, but all will benefit from a holistic approach—one that ministers to both body and soul. Striving to provide such a rich experience will require some “blood, sweat, and tears” from you and your leadership team. This retreat can help your middle school students immerse themselves into the vision of the Theology of the Body. This can be a powerful opportunity to engage their minds and hearts, and challenge them to grow in maturity and purity. This retreat can lay the foundation and light a spark for powerful formation and growth. Expect great things to happen, and you won't be disappointed!

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. One *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* DVD set per group.
2. One *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* Leader's Guide per facilitator.
3. One *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* Student Workbook per student.
4. One *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition* Parent Guide per family.

Please do not let cost be an obstacle. Ascension Press will work with you to obtain the best bulk discounts, and we can make suggestions about approaching sponsors. Groups such as the Knights of Columbus are often willing to help support young people to grow in their faith.

SCHEDULING NOTE

In this Retreat Guide, we offer a specific timeline for your retreat day. This is offered only as a suggestion. It is more important for you to divide the day into two or three main sections than to use this particular timeline. These “time blocks” are:

1. Morning through lunch
2. Afternoon to dinner
3. After dinner into the evening (*optional*)

Approaching your planning with these time blocks in mind will help you and your team create a schedule that fits your particular needs. This approach will also help you see the “big picture”—namely, how the overall retreat will flow from session to session.

A DYNAMIC RETREAT

All effective and inspiring teen retreats have a number of key elements. These include:

1. **Positive, Inviting Retreat Environment.** Find a retreat location that takes your students outside of their normal experience.
2. **Flexible Schedule.** Middle school students want both structure and freedom. This can be a bit tricky at this age, but keeping everyone active and engaged will help keep things in balance.
3. **Include Mass and Sacrament of Reconciliation.** If possible, have a priest available at some point during the day to offer Mass and confession. (You may also want to have a period of Eucharistic adoration.) Our suggested schedule provides some options for offering Mass and confession (and adoration, as well).
4. **Inspiring Music.** As you know, most adolescents’ lives have musical “sound tracks” filling nearly every moment of the day. Use this to your advantage. Having skilled and enthusiastic musicians for the retreat is a crucial investment. This is especially true if the musicians are not only able to lead *music*, but are gifted at leading young people into experiences of authentic *worship*. (*Note:* Great live music is ideal, but inspiring recorded music is better than bad live music.)
5. **Quiet Time.** Young people rarely get silence these days, and they appreciate it— especially when they have guidance on how to approach it. Consider scattering periods of silence throughout the day to give your students time to reflect and think.
6. **Keep Them Engaged!** Mix things up by using a variety of activities and methods of interacting with your students. This will keep them comfortably “on their toes.” Keep in mind the learning styles of your young people, both individually and as a group.
7. **Make It Personal.** On a retreat, young people do not want a classroom environment. They are open to going on a retreat precisely because it offers something different. Share how the TOB has affected your own life. Young people love hearing how a given message has impacted other lives, because it helps them apply it to their own. Sharing real experiences (prudently) and being personable while delivering the message is a *must* for leaders.
8. **Relevant, Engaging, Substantive, Hopeful Sessions.** As a leadership team, carefully and prayerfully assess your own gifts: Who will make the best speakers and presenters? Who will really connect with the kids? Ask God for guidance on this point. A captivating speaker is great, but substance is *imperative*. You want to match the right presenter to the right topic. Not only is the material rich and exciting, its truth will touch young hearts, especially those who are hearing it for the first time or who have gotten off-track. Encourage presenters to share each message with an attitude of hope and encouragement.

9. **Team Unity.** Plan and pray as a team so that everyone is on the same page, creating a positive environment from the start.
10. **Dynamic and Flexible.** When it comes to retreats, “dynamic” is more important than “entertaining.” A dynamic retreat has a variety of options and “moving parts.” Keep a close eye on your students throughout the day—along with a prayerful attentiveness to the movement of the Holy Spirit—and adjust the schedule and activities to meet the particular needs of your group on the spot if that is what is truly needed.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY FOR TEENS: MIDDLE SCHOOL EDITION DVD RESOURCE

To enhance each retreat talk, use parts of the companion program DVD, allowing the authors and other youth experts to help you present the material to your group. Be sure to review the DVD series in its entirety as you plan for your retreat. This will help you to prepare and present the information to your group even more effectively.

As you review the DVD series in preparation for the retreat, you will find that each chapter of the *TOB for Teens* program has four segments, including short talks, interviews, “Man on the Streets” segments, and animated trivia games. You can also mix and match the retreat presentations, rotating between live presenters and DVD segments. As you review the series, make notes of which features you want to include in your retreat experience. Be sure to note the key points you want to review with students after you present a DVD segment. This will help to reinforce the most important concepts as they move into their small group discussion time.

To help with planning, each leader/facilitator should view the *Leadership Training Series*. This is free and available for viewing by visiting AscensionPress.com. The link to the series can be found with the information on the *Middle School Edition*. This is a valuable video lesson plan with co-hosts and co-authors, Brian Butler and Colin MacIver. At the very least, watch the Intro to TOB, the Program Overview, and chapters 1-3 as you prepare to lead the retreat. It would be ideal if all of your facilitators also reviewed these videos.

FORMAT & SCHEDULE

Below is a suggested format and schedule. Feel free to adapt the following framework to fit the needs of your group.

9:00am – Introduction

- **Ground Rules.** Make the rules for the day clear and simple. Insist that one person talks at a time, and that there is an environment of respect and openness. Encourage participation in discussions, activities, and especially in prayer.
- **Introduce the Day.** Invite your students to be open to what they will hear throughout the day. Remind them that the purpose of a retreat is to step back from everyday distractions to focus on what God is trying to say to us. Tell them that today God wants to show them the answer to a very big and important question, “Who am I?” Through the sessions, music, prayer, and interaction with their peers, God will speak to them powerfully about their identity as his sons and daughters.
- **Introductory Prayer.** If there is a music ministry, have them start with an upbeat song or two. If not, a simple opening prayer will do, maybe even just an Our Father, reminding them that we are all sons and daughters of a loving God.

9:15am – Morning Session

- **Opening Prayer** (3 min) Start with the prayer in Chapter One. (2).¹
- **Icebreaker** (10 min) Choose an icebreaker (L-2).
- **Present DVD Clips – Part 1**
 - *Option A:* (10 min) Play the first set of Chapter One DVD clips (segments 1&2).
 - *Option B:* (25 min) Play Chapter One, segment 1 in its entirety. Then play segment 2 in a “stop and start” fashion, discussing each of the answers before moving on to the next clip.²
- **Read Aloud** (7 min) “Story Starter” (2) and “Bridging the Gap” (4).
- **Discuss** (10 min) Take a minute or two to have everyone read and fill in both sets of “If You Ask Me” questions (3-4). Then discuss their answers.

MAIN CONTENT

- **Teach** (35 min)³ Teach “To the Core” (5-8) or have participants take turns reading paragraphs aloud. Allow students to discuss the “If You Ask Me” sections and other relevant discussion questions as you go.
- **Demonstrate** (12 min) Do the “Cookie Quest” exercise (L-7).

FINISH HERE

- **“Got It?”** (3 min) Have your group fill out this review feature (9) to ensure reading comprehension.
- **Present DVD Clips – Part 2** (6 min) Play the second half of the DVD clips from Chapter One (segments 3 & 4).
- **Pray/Reflect/Journal** (12 min) Use a song from “Tune In” (L-1) as an opportunity to reflect and journal. Find the lyrics online and provide them for your group so they can listen, reflect, and journal on the song.
- **Closing Prayer** (2 min) • Do the closing prayer (8).

11:15am – Break**11:30am – Mass** (if available)**12:15pm – Lunch + Free Time**

Note: This age group eats fast and does not sit for long. Provide some structured activities during this time (e.g., kickball, Capture the Flag, Ultimate Frisbee, or a scavenger hunt).

1:15pm – Afternoon Session

- **Opening Prayer** (3 min) Start with the prayer (12).
- **Icebreaker** (10 min) Do the “Taste Test” icebreaker (L-12).
- **Present DVD Clips – Part 1**

¹ Note: *TOB for Teens Student: Middle School Edition Leader’s Guide* contains two types of pages. Pages that start with “L” (e.g. “L-5”) contains material unique to the Leader’s Guide. Numbered pages (without the “L”) refers to content that is in both LG and Student Workbook.

² Note: If you choose this option, reduce your “teach” time in the next section (“Main Content”) to twenty minutes.

³ *Teaching Tips:* Remember, if you chose “Option B” in the DVD section, reduce this to twenty minutes. If you choose to teach the main content on your own (rather than having students read aloud from the book), review the objectives on page L-1.

- *Option A:* (10 min) Play the first half of the Chapter 2 DVD clips (segments 1 & 2).
- *Option B:* (25 min)¹ Play Chapter Two, segment 1. Then play segment 2 in “stop and start” fashion, discussing each of the answers before moving on to the next clip.
- **Read Aloud** (7 min) “Story Starter” (12-14) and “Bridging the Gap” (14-15).
- **Discuss** (5 min) Have your group complete “If You Ask Me” features (14–15), and then discuss their answers.

MAIN CONTENT

- **Teach** (35 min)² Teach “To the Core” (15-19) or have participants take turns reading paragraphs aloud. Allow students to ask questions and discuss the “If You Ask Me” sections and other relevant discussion questions (15–19).
- **Application** (20 min)
- Do “Scam vs. Truth” exercise (L-18).
- Select “Work It Out” exercise (20, option A or B); these interactive exercises give students ownership of their learning.

FINISH HERE

- **“Got It?”** (3 min) Have the group fill out this review feature (21) to ensure reading comprehension.
- **Present DVD Clips – Part 2** (6 min) Play the second half of the DVD clips from Chapter Two (segments 3 & 4).
- **Pray/Reflect/Journal** (10 min) Use a song from “Tune In” (L-11) as an opportunity to reflect and journal. Find the lyrics online and provide them for your group so they can listen, reflect, and journal on the song.
- **Closing Prayer** (2 min) Pray the closing prayer (20).

If you need to shorten the day, then conclude here with a closing prayer, song, snack, and activity. For a fuller retreat experience, offer the following evening session.

CONTINUE HERE FOR THE FULL RETREAT EXPERIENCE

3:15 p.m. – Prayer Time

Suggestion: Silence can be challenging for this age group, but it is also vital to growing in prayer. Read **1 Kings 19:11-13**, and explain that hearing God’s voice requires stillness and quietness. Then allow about ten minutes of quiet time for your teens to listen for God’s voice and to write down three simple things that they think God is trying to teach them today. Close the time with a familiar prayer like an Our Father or Hail Mary.

3:30pm – Snacks/Physical Games/Activities

4:15pm – Evening Session

- **Opening Prayer** (3 min) Start with the prayer (24).
- **Icebreaker** (10 min) Do the “Charades” icebreaker (L-24).
- **Present DVD Clips – Part 1**

¹ *Note:* As in the morning session, reduce your “teaching” time by fifteen minutes if you choose this option. To help you present the material, review the objectives (L-11)

² *Teaching Tip:* If you chose “Option B” in the DVD section, reduce this to twenty minutes.

- *Option A* (10 min): Play the first half of the Chapter Three DVD clips (segments 1 & 2).
- *Option B* (25 min): Play segment 1. Then play segment Two in “stop and start” fashion, discussing each of the answers before moving on to the next clip. (*Reduce your “teaching” time accordingly, as in the previous two sessions.*)
- **Read Aloud** (7 min) “Story Starter” (24-25) and “Bridging the Gap” (25–26).
- **Discuss** (5 min) Have group do “If You Ask Me” (25–26), then discuss their answers.

MAIN CONTENT

- **Teach** (35 min)¹ Teach “To the Core” (26-31), or have participants take turns reading paragraphs aloud. Allow students to ask questions and discuss “If You Ask Me” and other relevant discussion questions as you go.
- **Application** (20 min)
 - *Option 1:* Do the “Application” (L-31) with posters and Scripture.
 - *Option 2:* Do “Work It Out” (32, Option A or B). These interactive exercises give students ownership of their learning.

FINISH HERE

- **“Got It?”** (3 min) Have your group fill out the “Got It?” review feature (33) to ensure reading comprehension.
- **Present DVD Clips - Part 2** (6 min) Play the second half of the DVD clips from Chapter Three (segments 3 & 4).
- **Pray/Reflect/Journal** (12 min) Play a song from “Tune In” (L-23) as an opportunity to reflect and journal. Find the lyrics online and provide them for your group so they can listen, reflect, and journal on the song.
- **Closing Prayer** (2 min) Pray the closing prayer (32).

6:15pm – Break

6:30pm – Dinner (pizza?)

7:15pm – Reconciliation and/or Adoration (*If Mass was not celebrated earlier, this is an appropriate time.*)

Concluding Group Activity: Resolution & Commitment. The purpose of this final activity is to provide a space for each member of your group to reflect upon the day in order to make a virtuous personal commitment.

Step 1: Give each student a blank sheet of paper and a pen. Instruct them to write, in large letters at the top of their page: I FIRMLY RESOLVE, WITH THE HELP OF YOUR GRACE ... (or provide handouts with this phrase printed at the top).

Step 2: Take a moment to teach your teens about the value of making a resolution, and how this can be even more meaningful when done in the context of prayer.

Step 3: Encourage them to ask the Holy Spirit to help them focus simply on *one* thing that they should resolve to do as they leave the retreat and head home. Then, ask them to write a short description of their resolution and commitment, asking God for the grace to carry it out. This can be especially effective if done after the sacrament of reconciliation or during a time of silent, reflective prayer.

¹ *Note:* If you chose DVD Option B, decrease this session to twenty minutes. Prepare by reviewing the objectives (L-23).

Note: Doing this resolution activity at the end of Chapter Three can be a nice way to “ramp up” to the more involved exercise of commitment in Chapter Four called the “Virtue Project” (see L-45 and 45 of the *Student Workbook*).

8:00pm – Concluding Prayer

Consider closing with an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

A FINAL RETREAT SUGGESTION: CONSIDER A “PARENT TRACK”

Consider inviting the parents at the end of the day for a private presentation (i.e., without the teens). Remind parents that because they are the primary “teachers” of their children, their involvement in helping their teens get the most out of this program is important. Give them an overview of what their children did and learned on the retreat.

Be sure to show the “Parent’s Session” on disc 4 of the DVD set, which is a wonderful introduction to the Theology of the Body and overview of the *Middle School* program.

Finally, give each family a *Parent’s Guide*, which includes a summary of each of the lessons, followed by study questions to help parents get the conversation going at home. Be sure to stress the value of reading it and discussing the questions with their children.

If you close with adoration, you may want to consider meeting with the parents during this time, as your students might be distracted if their parents are present. If you are able to close with Mass, have the parents’ session beforehand and invite them to participate. In other words, Mass is communal, where adoration is more personal, so be sensitive to allowing private space during adoration.

Consider closing the “Parent Track” with an adaptation of the prayer from Chapter Eight (100):

Lord Jesus,

In your Cross and Resurrection, you showed us the power of the body to express true love.

Help us, your disciples, to offer ourselves as signs of real love and commitment to our children. Help us to show that love not only in the words we say, but in the things we do.

Make us sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to pray for our children, that they will be protected from impurity, hurt, and hopelessness. Make them open to receive your gift of selfless love.

We ask these things in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

