Session 10. The Language of the Body

Movement IV. The Body

Passages: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Romans 12:1; Genesis 2:24-25

Part 1. Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. That the group finds Genesis 2:24 quoted in an unexpected place in 1 Corinthians 6 and works out for itself why St. Paul thinks the body cannot be a neutral instrument.

Catholic Touchstone. The body is not a possession the person happens to own and may lend out. It expresses the person. Chastity is the successful integration of sexuality within the person, not the suppression of it, and it is asked of everyone, married and unmarried alike (CCC 2332, 2337, 2348-2350).

What You Need to Know

Tonight is the session where the leader is most tempted to be either soft or harsh, and both are failures. A large share of engaged couples presenting for marriage preparation are already living together or already sleeping together. They know what the Church teaches. What they have usually never heard is why, in terms that treat them as adults.

Decide before the session that you will not shame anyone and you will not blur anything. Those are compatible. The whole session is an argument that the Church's position follows from what the body is, and an argument can be made warmly.

THE STRANGEST QUOTATION OF GENESIS 2:24 IN THE BIBLE

In 1 Corinthians 6:16, St. Paul is arguing against men visiting prostitutes, and he quotes Genesis 2:24: the two shall become one flesh. Sit with how odd that is. He applies the marriage verse to a transaction that nobody involved regarded as a marriage.

His logic is the heart of tonight. The bodily act means something whether or not the participants intend it to. If a purely commercial encounter still makes one flesh, then the body is not a neutral instrument that carries whatever meaning we assign to it. It has a language of its own, and we can speak that language truthfully or falsely, but we cannot switch it off.

Your group can find this themselves. It is the fourth time Genesis 2:24 has appeared in this study and by now they should be able to spot it.

WHAT THE BODY IS FOR, ACCORDING TO THE PASSAGE

Walk through the claims in order, because St. Paul stacks them.

- The body is not meant for immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body (6:13).
- Your bodies are members of Christ (6:15). This is not a metaphor about attitude; it is a claim about what baptism did.
- Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you (6:19).
- You are not your own; you were bought with a price (6:19-20).

That last sentence is the memory verse and it is the whole argument in miniature. The modern case for sexual autonomy rests on the premise that my body is mine. St. Paul denies the premise, and he denies it on the grounds of the cross rather than on the grounds of rules.

CHASTITY IS NOT WHAT MOST PEOPLE THINK IT IS

The Catechism defines chastity as the successful integration of sexuality within the person (CCC 2337), and describes the apprenticeship in self-mastery at CCC 2339. Notice that word: integration, not suppression. The virtue is not the absence of desire but the ordering of it, which is why chastity is asked of married people too, in a different form.

St. Thomas Aquinas placed chastity under temperance, whose work is to order an appetite toward the good rather than to destroy it. This is worth saying to a room that half suspects the Church regards sex as a regrettable concession.

And say the positive thing outright: the Church's teaching on sex is one of the highest views of the body held by anyone. She thinks it means so much that she will not permit it to be said casually.

THE NUPTIAL MEANING OF THE BODY

The vocabulary comes from St. John Paul II's catecheses. The claim is straightforward: the body has a capacity to express love as a gift of the whole person, and that capacity is what makes the marital act what it is.

Put it in the language of Session 8. The vows say: I give you all of myself, permanently, exclusively, and I am open to what comes. The marital act says the same thing without words. When the body says that sentence and the will has not yet said it, the body is saying something that is not yet true.

That is the actual Catholic argument about sex before marriage, and it is not about rules or risk. It is about telling the truth with your body.

COHABITATION, HANDLED WITHOUT CHEATING

Be careful and be honest, because this is where leaders reach for arguments that will not hold.

Do not build your case on social science claiming that living together raises the risk of divorce. Research on the so called cohabitation effect is genuinely contested, findings have shifted as cohabitation has become common, and a couple who later reads a study that contradicts you will conclude that the whole session was propaganda. Say plainly that the data is disputed and that the Church's position does not rest on it.

The Church's actual argument is the one above: the body speaks, and a shared bed says what has not yet been sworn. There is a second and more practical point that couples find persuasive: it is very hard to test freedom while living as though the question is settled. Session 8 asked whether they came freely. A couple whose lease, furniture, and finances have merged has fewer degrees of freedom in that question than they think.

A CONCRETE PATH, BECAUSE OTHERWISE THE TEACHING IS ABSTRACT

Couples who are already living together will ask what to do, and you must have an answer that is not simply move out tonight.

- The ideal, where it is possible, is separate residences until the wedding. Many couples find this easier than they expected once they name a date.
- Where separate housing is genuinely not possible, because of finances, a lease, or children, the ordinary pastoral counsel is to live in continence, with separate sleeping arrangements, and to say so honestly to the priest preparing them.
- In either case: confession, and a plan rather than an intention. Intentions do not survive Friday night. Plans do.

And say the pastoral thing clearly: cohabitation is not by itself a canonical impediment or an automatic bar to marrying, and nobody here is being graded. Do not promise that no wedding will ever be affected; the priest preparing them may have things to raise, and honesty with him is the point. Session 8 already covered what actually threatens consent, and this is not on that list.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Genesis 2:24-25 is the foundation, and it is quoted in tonight's text. Fourth appearance in this study.
- Genesis 3:7, where shame enters and the covering begins. The body is still the same body; what changed is our ability to be seen.
- The prophets of Session 3 use bodily infidelity as the image of covenant infidelity, which only works if the body means something.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 is among the earliest surviving Christian instructions on sexual holiness and is remarkably direct.
- Romans 12:1 asks for bodies presented as a living sacrifice, which places the whole discussion under worship rather than under regulation.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE ON WANTING IT AND NOT WANTING IT

In his Confessions, St. Augustine describes praying, in his younger years, for chastity and for continence, and asking God to grant it but not yet. He is honest that part of him was afraid the prayer would be answered.

He is the patron voice for this session because he does not pretend the struggle was small, and because he came out the other side. Anyone in the room who has been quietly assuming that the Church's teaching is written by people who never wanted anything should meet him.

Summary of his account in Confessions, Book VIII.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN PAUL II ON USING A PERSON

Before he was pope, St. John Paul II argued that a person is the kind of being who may never be treated merely as a means to an end, and that this holds inside a relationship as much as outside one. The opposite of love, in his account, is not hatred but use.

Applied to a couple: the question is not only whether both parties agreed. It is whether each is being received as a person or employed as a source of something.

Summary of his argument in Love and Responsibility.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ON ORDERING AN APPETITE

St. Thomas treats chastity as a part of temperance, whose work is to order an appetite toward the good rather than to eliminate it. On his account the chaste person is not the person with the weakest desires but the person whose desires have been ordered by reason toward the true good.

Say this to a room that suspects the Church of hostility to the body. She is not asking anyone to despise desire. She is asking that desire be purified and ordered by reason and love, and wanted truthfully.

Summary of his treatment of chastity, Summa Theologiae II-II, question 151.

Catechism Connection

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 2332 states that sexuality affects all aspects of the person, in the unity of body and soul, and concerns especially affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and the aptitude for bonds of communion.

CCC 2337 defines chastity as the successful integration of sexuality within the person and the inner unity of the person in body and spirit. **CCC 2339** is where the Catechism describes the apprenticeship in self-mastery.

CCC 2348-2350 states that all the baptized are called to chastity in the form proper to their state, and that those engaged to be married are called to live it in continence, discovering in that time a mutual respect and an apprenticeship in fidelity.

CCC 2390 addresses the free union, meaning a sexual union without public and permanent commitment, and identifies the underlying problem as a refusal or an inability to commit, and speaks of the fragility of a union that has no public and permanent character.

CCC 1632 connects preparation for marriage with the freedom of the consent, which is the practical link to Session 8.

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY)

One Flesh reappears in the strangest place in the study. Wait for the group to notice that Genesis 2:24 is being quoted about a prostitute. That recognition is the engine of tonight and it should come from them.

They Have No Wine returns. This is where a couple's own resources run out first, and running out is not a character verdict. Use the phrase out loud tonight: this is the first place most couples discover they have no wine.

The Bridegroom is quiet.

Leader restraint. Do not turn a general session into a private correction of the couple you know is cohabiting. Teach the room. Follow up individually later if it is right to do so.

IF A COUPLE IS IN AN IRREGULAR SITUATION (LEADER ONLY)

A couple who are living together. Assume there is at least one and possibly several. Do not look at them, do not build the session around them, and do not ask anyone to disclose anything. Give the concrete path from the front, to the whole room, in a matter of fact tone, and make sure it includes the case where moving out is not possible. Then be available afterward without hovering.

A couple who are sleeping together but living apart. They will often assume tonight is not about them. Make sure the teaching is about what the body says rather than about addresses.

A couple who have been chaste and are visibly proud of it. Watch for contempt. Say something in the room about how this virtue is not a scoreboard, and that the Church asks chastity of everyone in every state including within marriage.

Pornography. It will be present in your room whether or not it is mentioned. Handle it in the Dig Deeper box, without drama, with a real path: confession, honesty with the fiance, and practical accountability. If someone discloses a compulsive pattern, route them to the priest and to professional help, and note kindly that this is the kind of thing a fiance should know before consent rather than after.

Any disclosure of past abuse. If tonight surfaces a history of sexual abuse, receive it, do not probe, and route to the priest and to a qualified counselor. Do not attempt to counsel it yourself, and do not treat it as a chastity

> issue. It is not one.

Session Goals

1. The group discovers Genesis 2:24 quoted in 1 Corinthians 6 and can explain why St. Paul uses it there.
2. Every participant can state the Catholic argument about sex before marriage in terms of what the body says, without reference to rules or risk.
3. Every participant can define chastity as integration rather than suppression, and can say why the married are also called to it.
4. The cohabitation question is handled honestly, including the concession that the social science is disputed.
5. Any couple currently cohabiting leaves with a concrete path and a person to talk to, and without having been singled out.

Time Note and Pre-Chosen Cuts

Ninety-minute plan. Opening prayer, 4 minutes. Win questions, 10. Live discovery moment, 14. Build questions 1 through 4, 22. The steelman, 18. Build questions 5 through 7 and the Dig Deeper, 16. Send and Live It, 4. Closing prayer, 2.

Seventy-five minute plan. Cut Build question 5 and shorten the Win section to one question. Keep the concrete path and keep the steelman.

Tone warning. If your voice changes when you reach the cohabitation material, the room will hear it. Practice saying that paragraph out loud beforehand in the same tone you use for everything else.

Part 2. Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

OPENING PRAYER

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

Lord, you made our bodies and you took one for yourself, and you have never once been embarrassed by us. Tonight we are going to talk about things most rooms do not talk about honestly. Keep us from shame and keep us from pretending. Teach us what we are actually saying to each other, and give us the courage to say only what is true. Amen.

Win. Getting Started

Open questions. No wrong answers, no answer box. Let every couple speak once before anyone speaks twice.

A. What is something your body says without you deciding to say it? Blushing, flinching, a face you cannot control. Any examples?

B. Where did you first learn what sex means? Not the mechanics. The meaning.

Build. Into the Text

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 aloud. All of it. Then wait before asking anything.

LIVE DISCOVERY MOMENT

The instruction: somewhere in the passage you just heard, St. Paul quotes a verse we have met four times in this study. Find it, and then answer one question: why on earth would he quote that verse here?

Eight minutes, in pairs.

What they will find: verse 16 quotes Genesis 2:24, the two shall become one flesh, in the middle of an argument about a man and a prostitute.

Then press the question. Nobody in that transaction thinks they are getting married. St. Paul says one flesh happens anyway. What does that imply about the act itself?

Let them reach it: the meaning is not assigned by the participants. It is in the act. The body has a language and we do not control what the words mean, only whether we say them truthfully.

Second instruction, five minutes: find everything in this passage that St. Paul says the body is for. They will list: for the Lord, a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit, and not your own because you were bought with a price.

1. Verse 12 quotes a slogan the Corinthians were apparently using: all things are lawful for me. How does St. Paul handle it?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

He does not deny it outright. He qualifies it twice: not all things are helpful, and he will not be enslaved by anything.

That is a more interesting move than a flat prohibition. He is asking about mastery rather than permission.

The question is not only may I, but who is in charge of me.

Ask the room where else in their lives they have discovered that being allowed to do something was not the same as being free.

2. Take the sentence you are not your own, you were bought with a price. What premise is that denying, and what does it replace it with?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

It denies the premise that my body is my own property to dispose of as I choose. That premise underlies almost every contemporary argument about sex, and St. Paul rejects it directly.

He replaces it not with a rule but with an event: you were bought with a price. The claim on the body comes from the cross.

Note the tone. This is not said as a threat. Two verses earlier he has called their bodies temples of the Holy Spirit. The argument runs on dignity, not on shame.

3. Think back to Session 8, to the words you will say at the altar. Now describe what the marital act says, if the body has a language.

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

It says what the vows say. I give you all of myself. Permanently. Exclusively. And I am open to whatever comes of this.

Which means: when the body says that sentence and the will has not yet said it publicly, the body is saying something that is not yet true. That is the Catholic argument about sex before marriage, and it is worth stating cleanly because most people have never heard it stated at all.

Notice what the argument is not. It is not that sex is dirty, that the couple will be punished, or that a rule has been broken for its own sake. It is a claim about truthfulness.

BUILD THEN PRESS: WE ARE GETTING MARRIED ANYWAY, SO THIS IS NOT A LIE

Build it at full strength.

Build it fully and generously. Most of your room holds some version of it and they deserve to hear it made well.

The Catholic argument says the body speaks a language of total, permanent, exclusive self gift, and that saying it before the wedding makes it false. But we are not two strangers. We are engaged. We have decided, publicly, in front of our families, that this is permanent. The wedding will formalize something that is already true, and treating a date on a calendar as the moment when the same act flips from lie to truth is legalism, not truthfulness. Living together, meanwhile, is often simply prudent: rent is expensive, we are already committed, and learning to share a household before the wedding removes an enormous source of stress in the first year. It is difficult to see who is harmed, and easy to see the strain the alternative places on couples who are already stretched thin.

Then press.

Concede several things at once, and mean them. The prudential points about rent and stress are real. Nobody

in that room is a stranger to their fiance. And a Catholic who argues from social science that cohabitation raises divorce risk should stop: that literature is genuinely contested, findings have shifted as cohabitation has become common, and the Church's position does not rest on it.

Press first on freedom. Session 8 asked whether they come freely. A couple whose lease, furniture, finances, and daily life have merged retains fewer real degrees of freedom in that question than they believe. The engagement is exactly the period in which the answer is supposed to still be open, and the strongest reason for the Church's counsel is that it keeps it open.

Press second on the difference between deciding and swearing. An engagement is a serious intention. It is also, at present, revocable by either party, though ending one can still be done unjustly or dishonestly, and canon law recognizes that a promise of marriage can carry obligations. That is not a technicality; it is the actual difference between what an engagement is and what a marriage is. The body's sentence is not I intend to give myself. It is I give myself.

Press third, gently, on experience. Ask the room whether anyone has ever known a couple who were certain, who lived as though it were settled, and for whom it was not. Almost every room has one. The point is not fear; it is that the seriousness of intention is not itself the thing that makes it permanent.

Do not overclaim. Do not say their relationship is a lie, do not predict their marriage will suffer, and do not treat this as the most important thing the Church teaches about marriage. It is not, and pretending otherwise has driven more people out of marriage preparation than any teaching in this study.

A CONCRETE PATH

Give this to the whole room, evenly, without looking at anyone.

Where separate residences are possible before the wedding, that is the ideal, and most couples who name a date find it more workable than they expected.

Where it is genuinely not possible, because of a lease, finances, or children, the ordinary pastoral counsel is to live in continence with separate sleeping arrangements, and to tell the priest preparing you honestly.

In either case: go to confession, and make a plan rather than form an intention. Intentions do not survive Friday night. Plans do.

And say this plainly: cohabitation is not by itself a canonical impediment or an automatic bar to marrying, and nobody here is being graded. Be honest with the priest preparing you rather than assuming nothing will be raised. Session 8 covered what actually threatens consent, and this is not on that list.

4. The Catechism defines chastity as the successful integration of sexuality within the person. Why integration rather than suppression, and why is it asked of married people too?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

Because the goal is not the absence of desire but its ordering. St. Thomas puts chastity under temperance, whose work is to bring an appetite into line with what the person actually wants, not to kill it.

And married people are asked for it because desire does not become automatically well ordered by a wedding. Chastity within marriage means desire that receives the spouse as a person rather than employing them, that is faithful in the imagination as well as the body, and that remains capable of restraint when love requires it.

Practical version for the room: whatever you practice now, you will be practicing then, with the same nervous system.

DIG DEEPER: PORNOGRAPHY, SAID PLAINLY AND WITHOUT DRAMA

It is in nearly every room, and silence about it is not kindness. The Catechism treats it as gravely contrary to chastity because it separates sexuality from the person and turns another human being into an object for consumption, injuring both the viewer and those depicted (CCC 2354).

The path is ordinary: confession, honesty with your fiance, and practical accountability rather than resolve alone. Where the pattern is compulsive, professional help alongside the sacraments is not a failure of faith, it is competence.

One thing to say directly. This belongs in the honesty of Session 8. A serious ongoing pattern that will affect married life should be disclosed before consent rather than discovered afterward, and the timing, scope, and privacy of that conversation are worth taking to a priest or a qualified counselor rather than improvising.

COUPLE CONVERSATION (JUST THE TWO OF YOU, NOT THE ROOM)

Just the two of you, and this one is confidential to you.

What are we actually doing, and what have we been telling ourselves about it? Say it plainly, without either of us defending ourselves.

What is our plan between now and the wedding? Not our intention. Our plan, with specifics: where, when, and what changes this week.

Is there anything either of us needs to say to the other about our past or our present that we have been avoiding?

5. Genesis 2:25 said they were naked and not ashamed. Given everything tonight, what would it take to get back to that?

ANSWER (SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION)

Not the removal of clothing. The removal of the reasons to hide.

Which means honesty first, then forgiveness, and then a covenant strong enough that being fully known is not dangerous. That is the order, and it explains why the Church puts the vows before the bed rather than after.

End the session here rather than on the practical material. The goal of tonight is not compliance. It is Genesis 2:25.

Send. Carrying It Out

Open questions again. No answer boxes.

Y. What is one true thing you want your body to say to your spouse for the next fifty years?

Z. Who do you know who needs to hear that the Church's teaching about the body is a high view of it rather than a low one?

Live It This Week

- **Make the plan, not the intention.** Write down what changes this week, with specifics, and tell one other person besides your fiance.

- **Go to confession.** Anyone conscious of grave sin should go before receiving communion, and everyone here is warmly encouraged to go this week regardless. If it has been a long time, say so at the start and let the priest help.
- **Say the avoided thing.** If the Couple Conversation surfaced something about your past or present that has gone unsaid, say it this week.
- **Read Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 127 before next session,** and notice how children are described.

Closing Prayer

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, you made these bodies and you are not ashamed of them. Teach us to tell the truth with them. Where we have said with our bodies what was not yet true, forgive us, and do not let shame keep us from you. Give us the freedom of the garden, where two people could be fully seen and not afraid. Bring us to our wedding day with nothing hidden.

St. Augustine, pray for us. Our Lady, Mother most pure, pray for us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Part 3. Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in this session, in the order it appears.

- 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. The session text.
- Genesis 2:24. Quoted at 1 Corinthians 6:16. Fourth appearance in this study.
- Genesis 2:25 and 3:7. Naked and unashamed, and the covering.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. Among the earliest Christian instructions on sexual holiness.
- Romans 12:1. Bodies as a living sacrifice.
- Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 127. Assigned reading before Session 11.

Catechism Paragraphs Used

CCC 1632, 2332, 2337, 2348-2350, 2354, 2390.

Before Next Session

Read Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 127 before Session 11, and notice how children are described.