

*God's Plan
for Us*

*Respect for
Others*



Teaching the Way of Love

because humanity passes by way of the family . . .

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Please Pray That

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will challenge themselves to respect others at all times.
- Parents will have the strength to lead their family in purity of heart.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will cultivate a sense of awe and wonder for the gifts of life and family.
- Our children will find support inside the family and out to practice self-control and balance.
- Chastity will become a respected virtue again within our culture.
- No child (or parent) will ever find themselves beyond God's love and mercy.

The 6th and 9th Commandments - Teaching Respect

As parents we want desperately for our children to understand and embrace God's loving plan for their lives, including God's plan for their bodies, as they grow into adulthood. In other words, we want our children and ourselves to learn how to honor the Sixth and the Ninth Commandments.

The Sixth Commandment: Do Not Commit Adultery - This Commandment calls us to see and honor marriage as a sacred covenantal bond. It calls us to deepen our love and respect for each other, for marriage and for family.

The Ninth Commandment: Do Not Covet Your Neighbor's Wife - This Commandment calls us to love selflessly and never use another person. It calls us to see the goodness in our own spouse and in our own family instead of selfishly chasing a more pleasing experience with someone else.

The challenge of teaching these commandments was brought home to me in the last school year when I received a phone call from the school principal about my son. Apparently he had been part of a group of boys who were drawing "inappropriate" cartoons about girls. The news caught my wife and me a bit by surprise, as our son had yet not expressed much curiosity about girls or sexuality.

Thankfully, we felt prepared by our Catholic Faith to address this tough issue.

A few days later, my son and I had "The Talk." First we talked about human dignity. I told him that God created every human being to be loved and respected ("Yeah, I know that, Dad."). Then I asked my son, "What are some ways we can show other people respect?" He came up with some really good ones. So I told him I was proud of him for knowing how to show respect to others.

Next we talked about the fact that God created men and women to be different, but in a way that helps them to support and build each other up. I gave him a few examples of how his mother's strengths made up for some of my weaknesses. Then I asked him how we as men can show women the respect that God wants us to. Grudgingly, he came up with one or two ways he could show respect to the "icky girls."



Finally, I asked him what kinds of things we should never do - things that show disrespect toward others, and especially toward women and girls. To my surprise, my son had very little trouble listing off some good answers. Then I brought up the drawings he and his friends had created, and I asked him if these were respectful or disrespectful. He got it.

This talk was extremely effective. The problem at school was never mentioned again, and my son started showing obvious signs of respect toward some of the girls in his class. But my wife and I knew that our job wasn't done. Teaching our children to respect others, to respect their own bodies, and to respect the gift of fertility - these are ongoing tasks. Having one "The Talk" just won't cut it in today's culture.

So we continue to strategize for how we can lead our children to grow in their observance of the 6th and 9th Commandments. There are two virtues that we need especially to invite our children to grow in.

Purity of Heart: In the Beatitudes, Jesus tells us "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Sometimes we too narrowly understand the virtue of purity as being clean from sexual sin or even as remaining a virgin. But then what happens when our children fall into sexual sin? Does losing one's virginity mean that one cannot be pure? In the Catholic moral and spiritual tradition, purity doesn't mean cleanliness. It actually means purity of focus. And what is our focus? Our focus is on God. So the pure in heart shall see God because God is the focus of their lives. This understanding draws our children much deeper into God's goodness. In their sexuality, in their dating lives, in their marriages their focus should always be to seek God's will rather than their own selfish desires. And if they mess up? What happens when we lose our focus? We ask for forgiveness and we work to get our focus back. Jesus always offers us redemption.

Chastity: The Cardinal Virtue of Temperance is the virtue of self-control that tends toward balance. Chastity is a virtue that falls under this "umbrella" virtue. It specifically speaks to practicing sexual self-control for the sake of using our sexual powers according to God's will and design. When we practice self-control we choose to become more fully human, rather than acting as animals and giving in to every desire. We also embrace the fullness of God's goodness (love, family life, God's mission of holiness), rather than settling for only part of the goodness God has to offer us (momentary physical pleasure). Chastity and temperance don't mean giving up God's goodness. They mean giving up our immediate desires in order to get **more** of God's goodness.

So how do we teach our children these virtues?

- Focus your family on God. Pray together. Develop a family spirituality. Talk about your faith at the dinner table. Talk frequently about what it means to seek God's will and to sacrifice selfish desires.
- Talk to your children early and often about what it means to respect others the way God calls us to. Give them examples, and ask them to give you example as well. Then find ways to practice that respect together.
- Find easier ways for your children to practice self-control. Virtue is like a muscle. It gets built up over time. Ask your children to cut video game time, to wait until supper rather than eating a snack, to give up a treat and to give money to the poor instead. If your children can strengthen the self-control muscle in small ways now, they'll be better prepared to handle sexual self-control in the face of temptation.
- Learn more about God's plan for human sexuality and teach it to your children when they're ready to hear it! Click on the "Parenting Through Puberty" link at twl4parents.com for resources to help you, including a mini-class on male and female fertility that is meant for parents of children entering puberty.

This article tells about just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the [Teaching the Way of Love](#) program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the [Teaching the Way of Love](#) home study series for parents. Find out more at www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love.