

*Learning to
Live a Fully
Human Life*

Self-Control



**Teaching
the Way of Love**
because humanity passes by way of the family . . .

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PLEASE PRAY
THAT

- Parents will teach their children to honor the differences between men and women.
- Our culture will start to value the contributions that both men and women make to culture and society.
- Families can be a place where everyone learns they are respected and love, as well as how to respect and love others.
- The Catholic teaching on men and women will be better understood and more clearly taught.
- This Lent will be a time to renew passion for Jesus within our families.
- The Holy Spirit will help all parents to teach the mysteries of marital love faithfully and joyfully to their children.
- No child (or parent) will ever feel they are beyond God's loves and mercy.

Created Different But Equal

Last year my 8-year-old son discovered that there are biological differences between boys and girls. His discussion of this discovery got him into a bit of trouble at school, and earned him a few lessons with Daddy about respect. It made me thankful that I had the solid teachings of the Church to pull from. In today's cultural current that seeks to trivialize the difference between men and women, I think my conversation with my son could have gone very differently. Here is a basic outline of what I taught him.

1. Men and women are created differently. My son had already discovered the basic biological differences (and expressed those differences very artistically). But I explained to him that God created men and women different in many ways, not just in their bodies. One of the biggest differences is the way the male and female brains function. Several variances in brain structure lead to differences in perception, in communication, and in judgment.
2. God made these differences for a very good reason. He created men and women to complement each other. While the differences between men and women sometimes lead to conflict, they can also be shaped so that men and women can help each other. Here I offered some examples about how Mommy and Daddy complement each other. My wife often helps me see the big picture because the female brain is generally better at taking in the big picture. I help my wife focus on one thing at a time when the big picture gets overwhelming, because the male brain tends to be more focused on the parts rather than on the whole. Using concrete examples that my son actually experiences was a big help to him.
3. (And this was a big one for my son). These differences do not mean that men are better than women, or that women are better than men. Men and women are equal in dignity. They are equally loved by God. They are equally (though perhaps distinctly) capable. They are equally brave.



God planned men and women to complement each other, build each other up, and love each other.

Because humanity passes by way of the family...

4. God calls us to show the same respect and concern for everyone, no matter what sex they are. In a special way, men are called to respect women and women are called to respect men. Respect is how men and women turn their differences into a benefit rather than conflict. That makes learning respect for others really, really important. In fact, respect is a big part of learning to love one another as Jesus loves us.
5. Different levels of friendship make some behaviors that might be respectful in some situation disrespectful in others. For example, your friend might think it's funny when you steal his pencil or poke him in the ribs. But someone who doesn't know you so well will find those same actions disrespectful. We then went through examples of actions and words that an acquaintance might find disrespectful even though friends or family members might find them fun.

This conversation was incredibly successful. It isn't often that one of Dad's "lessons" causes an immediate change of conduct. His behavior in school changed and his attitude toward girls improved. I might be tempted to mark it up to parenting genius. But the truth is, everything I taught my son was simply what the Church teaches about men and women.

This message is a tough sell in today's world. Behind many cultural movements (most recently the cross-gender debates) is not just a sense of compassion, but also a desire to get rid of all differentiation between sexes. As Catholic parents we need to recognize that this comes from an academic philosophy (called modernism) that rejects what God teaches us about the world He created for us. Embracing modernism would have made this conversation with my son impossible. More importantly, it would mean ignoring the beautiful truth about why God created us male and female.

But by the grace of God, my son seemed to have understood what I was trying to teach him. Men and women are created to be different yet equal so that they can love and support each other. Revealing this truth to our children, and setting an expectation that they show respect and compassion for everyone, gets the results we want - a change in conduct and a deeper understanding about God's great plan for men and women.

Teach the Beauty of God's Plan For Men & Women

Your challenge this month is to prepare yourself to have this conversation with your own children. Whether that conversation is ready to happen now, or won't happen for a few years, it's important to be ready for it.

1. Review what the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches about the creation of man and woman in CCC 355-384.
2. "Growing the Way of Love," the second step in the *Teaching the Way of Love* Program, is designed to equip and empower parents to have these conversations with their children who are entering or going through puberty.

mycatholicbooksandmedia.com/shop/twl-growing-in-the-way-of-love-set/ for DVD + Workbook

mycatholicbooksandmedia.com/shop/twl-growing-in-the-way-of-love-online/ for Online Access.

3. Study the resources on the Teaching the Way of Love website found at

twl4parents.com/parenting-through-puberty/

This challenge is 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.