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# LIFE TEEN PARENT LETTER

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## LIFE NIGHT: DIGNIFIED

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

Disney has ruined our perception of reality. This is not a negative statement toward Disney, which most of us, admittedly, love. However, what the creative giant has given us permission to do is give objects, cars, candlesticks, and animals a life and a soul. We watch movie after movie that contain cars with personalities, animals that feel emotions and have moral dilemmas, and even tables and chairs who stand up and fight for a good cause. Through this imagination, the ‘toys’ we have in our houses for our kids take on qualities and characteristics that seem like they could come to life at any moment; our pets almost seem like, at times, they can start talking; and the trees in our backyard can, at any moment, break out into song. But no matter how big our fantasies and imaginations may be, we come to the realization that we, as human beings, are truly the only ones who are created in the ‘image and likeness of God’ (Genesis 1:25-27, 31) and are the only ones that have a soul.

As we embark on this new Life Night series, *More Than Flesh & Bones*, we will explore the dignity of the human person while delving into what it means to be body-soul composite beings. From the very beginning of creation, as God created the heavens and the Earth, as chaos was made into order, and life was being breathed into creation, God created man and woman as unique and wonderful creations. For humans are the only thing in God’s created world that are made in the image and likeness of God. Because of this, we have also been given the unique desire for God and the desire to seek God. We are made by God and for God (Colossians 1:16). This is what sets us apart from animals, and anything else in creation.

While animals rely fully on instinct to make decisions, we have a soul, which contains an intellect and a will that we use to ponder our choices and learn to choose what is good over what is evil. Not only that, we use the knowledge of being made in the image and likeness of God to propel us to treat ourselves and others with dignity and respect. As God says, we are “very good.” There is something different and special about humans; we are dignified. Through this Life Night series, we will learn how to exercise our body, minds, and souls, all for the purpose of bringing us closer to God.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. What is your response to hearing that all people are made in the “image and likeness of God?” Is this difficult to believe or embrace for some people? Why? Why not?
2. What are the qualities and characteristics that make you unique?
3. How have you come to believe that your life has value?

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## LIFE NIGHT: FORTIFIED

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

Think about the time you bought your first car. Whether or not this was a used car or a brand-new car, there was something about it that was special. The “new car” smell, the color of the paint, the way the tires and wheels shined in the sun, the first moment you pulled it into the driveway – it was all incredible. There was perhaps a process that you went through in which you washed that car weekly, cleaned it out frequently, or enforced rules of no eating or drinking for your passengers. You may have even serviced it often, making sure that there was always the correct amount of fluids in the engine, air in the tires, and the oil was changed every 3,500 miles. Over time, however, the washes became a little less frequent, the rules became a little more lenient, and the nice new smell of the interior faded away. What used to be a shiny new car in which you once had a lot of pride in, perhaps turned into a banged-up, dirty, not-too-shiny vehicle that you eventually replaced with another new car.

When we acquire something valuable or meaningful in life, whether it’s a car, house, new clothes, new puppy, etc., we do our best to maintain it, protect it from harm, and keep it functional. We are given the responsibility of taking care of it. The same is true for our bodies. Our bodies are a gift from God. And, no matter what condition we currently think our bodies are in, we are called to care for and maintain our bodies in the same way that we would care for and maintain a new car. We are given brand new bodies at the beginning of our life. Over time, we do our best to care for these bodies, but sometimes, like a new car, we fall short in maintaining them as we should.

Saint Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, calls our bodies “dwelling places” of the Holy Spirit. Our bodies, therefore, are a dwelling place in which God resides. Because of this, we must learn to care for our bodies, taking care of the wonderful gift that God has entrusted to us. In our world, it seems like we are constantly bombarded by the next current diet or exercise trend. We read about new theories on what we should or should not eat; what exercises we should or should not do; and constantly make resolutions to work out more. But diet and exercise go beyond the need to just be healthy or look good. Diet and exercise are both great ways in which we care for our bodies.

Temperance is a virtue that can help us take care of our bodies. Temperance means knowing and choosing to avoid every kind of excess; caffeine, sweets, unhealthy foods (CCC 1809, 2290). Temperance allows us to realize that we are consuming something to the extent in which it is having a negative effect on us, and choosing to remove that from our life. In doing so, we care for our bodies, which, in turn has a direct effect on our souls, just as we would care for anything else in our lives that hold value, just like that brand new car!

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. Do you consider yourself a “healthy” person, meaning, do you get enough exercise and maintain a good diet?
2. What are some ways that we, as a family, can exercise temperance? (Example: changing what we have for dinner, eliminating certain food from our house, etc.)
3. Is there anything that we can do that would promote a healthy lifestyle in our family?

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## LIFE NIGHT: EDIFIED

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

As we all get a little older, there comes a time in which we experience something that is a true testament to our age. It's that experience we have of walking into a room, turning on the lights, and then standing there, trying desperately to remember the reason why we entered it. Now, we can blame this on our own busyness, we can blame it on perhaps a certain distraction we may have faced, or we can even blame it on "old age."

Our brains are complex and are broken up into a variety of working parts. The part of our brain that is responsible for our intellect, reason, memory, personality, and language is called the Cerebrum. This part of the brain is the most developed in human beings. Humans are different from animals because we have reason and intellect. Reason and intellect are simply our ability to think, to understand, to process information, and to form judgments. Reason gives us the ability to learn what is true and what is false. Reason helps us search for facts and create theories based on those facts. But, most importantly, our intellect allows us to recognize the voice of God and choose to live according to His Word.

In addition to our reason and intellect, God gives each of us a conscience (that little voice in our head). "Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed" (CCC 1778). In other words, our brain allows us to take information from this world and make judgments on whether or not that information is right or wrong, good or evil, or even whether that information, or action, glorifies God.

Our brains are a gift from God and, like our bodies, we must exercise them, specifically our conscience. Perhaps the best way we can do this is by reading Sacred Scripture and the Catechism. Our intellect, reason, and conscience can be formed by doing so. This learning, and exercising, helps us not only get to know more about who we are, but most importantly, get to know God even more!

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. Who is someone we know that is very intelligent? What qualities does that person have that makes him or her intelligent?
2. How do you think intellect can lead us closer to God?
3. What are some ways in which we, as a family, can exercise our intellect, reason, and conscience?

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## LIFE NIGHT: SATISFIED

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

*“You have made us for Yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”  
- St. Augustine*

We desire many things. We may desire money, success, or fame. We may desire affirmation or to be known. We post things on social media and then constantly check it to see how many likes we got. We desire connection, relationships, and to be understood. We are always seeking, always searching, and always desiring more. As we said earlier in this series, we are made by God and for God, and because of this, God also gives us a deeper desire, a desire for Him.

Our lives can become restless because of the many things - other than God - that we desire, that we think will give us satisfaction and fulfillment. Sometimes this desire leads to the vices, like alcohol, drugs, pornography, or gambling. We soon realize that they do not bring complete satisfaction, but only lead to empty wells.

Throughout the past couple of weeks, we have focused on how to care for our bodies and minds. This week, we focus on how to care for our souls. Our soul is created by God immediately at conception and is immortal, which means that, even when the body dies, the soul lives on in eternal life. The soul is made to be united to God for all eternity. (CCC 366)

Exercise and a good diet are the best things we can do for our body. Reading Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church is one of the best ways we can train our mind. How do we exercise our soul? We can do this through a relationship with God. Prayer is our relationship with God, and is essential in caring for our souls. It is a way that we allow our souls to be united and connected to God.

There are many techniques and forms of prayer - reading Scripture, going to Mass, saying the *rosary*. Prayer can also exist in our daily conversations with God - speaking to Him like we would a friend, sharing our dreams, thoughts, frustrations, joys, and pains. Not only do we talk in prayer, but like in any conversation, there is a time of listening. God speaks truth to us, guides us, and reveals His presence; we must be silent and listen.

We are unique creations of God, formed and fashioned in His image and likeness. We are made by God and for God, to be in complete union with Him. God has blessed us with a body, mind, and a soul. In caring for our body, mind, and soul, we not only recognize the dignity of who we are, but become to closer to God in our own journey of faith.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. What is your prayer life currently like? What forms of prayer do you use on a daily or weekly basis?
2. How has prayer helped your relationship with God?
3. How can we pray together more as a family?