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Chapter  
**Two**

# Our Story

God's Plan, Human Sin, Jesus' Love



## Chapter 2

*The following is a true story. One day, I noticed that there was a small, inch-high pile of what looked like sawdust in my bedroom. "Hmmm," I thought, but not knowing what to make of it, I did nothing. A week later, the formerly inch-high pile was now three inches high. I again thought, "Uh-oh. Something's wrong. But I am too busy to worry about it, so I'll just ignore it." Another week went by—and a much higher pile of sawdust appeared. "Okay. I have to face it. I must find out what is going on." So I called a couple of friends, and one suggested that I call an exterminator, fearing that termites might be the culprit. The exterminator came and issued his verdict: carpenter ants!*

*He had to drill eighteen holes in my bedroom wall and spray poison in the holes to reach the ants inside. If I hadn't finally addressed the issue and turned to experts for help, part of my house could have fallen down.*

*—Monica Ashour*

God's plan for our lives does not include sin and destruction. We are always meant to be safe and secure under his protection. Yet sin enters in, just like the ants in our story entered into a place so dark and hidden that their presence was not immediately obvious. We don't like to look at those issues in our lives, the "sawdust clues" that point out that something is amiss.

*"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." — Genesis 1:27*

Yet God's love can penetrate those places of our hearts where we have allowed sin to exist. Jesus can eradicate our faults and sins. Sometimes, we may need the help of a counselor or spiritual director to help us heal

our respective wounds, faults, or sins. Healing often hurts. But Jesus, the true carpenter, can forgive us and rebuild us ... if we acknowledge our need and allow his healing touch to purify our hearts.

This chapter recalls the Christian story of our beginning, fall, redemption, and resurrection—and how each person participates in this story. In his *Theology of the Body*, John Paul II describes these movements as “Original Man” (where we came from; humanity before the Fall), “Historical Man” (where we are now), and “Eschatological Man” (where we are going). Especially important is for middle schoolers to understand that they have free will—that they can choose to do good or evil. Sin matters because sin hurts union. But Jesus sets us free to love.

In Chapter 2, your child will do the following:

- Explore God’s original plan for humanity.
- Understand original sin as a lost inheritance.
- Reflect on the experience of sin as a counterfeit of good.
- Anticipate the hope and healing Jesus brings.

### **Concupiscence and Con Artists**

The tendency to sin, known as *concupiscence*, is due to the Fall, the original sin of our first parents. Before the Fall, our desires were perfectly ordered toward the good; now, however, we often desire that which is not good for us. “Eve saw that the tree was good for food” despite the fact that God had explicitly said not to eat from it (see Genesis 3:6). Blessed John Paul II says that Adam and Eve fell because they “doubted the gift.” In other words, they began to see God as a tyrant who wanted to bring them down, rather than as a loving father who wanted to give them “every good gift” (see James 1:17).

As parents, you are the first representatives of God to your children as well as their first example of his loving law. Thus, consider that as you show your total, unconditional love for your child, you can show you

are not a tyrant. Instead, parents should give appropriate rules (neither overbearing nor lax) and consistently enforce them. Of course, a typical middle schooler may often *perceive* you as a tyrant, but remember that God, who banished his children from the Garden of Eden, sent his only Son to heal us and his Holy Spirit to give us hope and strength.

The most powerful con artist in the world is the devil. In fact, he is known as the “great deceiver,” who is *diabolos* (“slanderer” or “accuser”). He cons us into thinking sin is good, and when we fall for it, we experience division. This chapter presents several examples of division to your child:

- Between the body and the soul (i.e., death).
- Between us and nature (e.g. pain, defects, disease).
- Between us and others (hurt, backstabbing, divorce, the end of a relationship).
- Between us and God (a smaller spiritual death—*venial sin*—or a grave spiritual death—*mortal sin*).

How are we so deceived? The devil rarely tempts us with something that is obviously and repulsively evil. Were that the case, we wouldn't be attracted to it, and thus would not choose it. Instead, we are conned by counterfeits, fabricated fakes, and impious imposters.

*When we renew our  
Baptismal promises,  
we say, “I do” to the  
question, “Do you reject  
the glamour of evil and  
refuse to be mastered  
by sin?” – RCIA  
Study Edition, 219*

Chapter two compares temptation to email spam. The glitter and glamour of pop-ups promises pleasure. But when pursued, spam infects our computer and slows down its

processing speed. Then the spam perpetuates; if not corrected, it can overwhelm the entire hard drive.

It is important to train your child's truth, beauty, and goodness detector. Point out scams and distortions in the media. Underscore that these counterfeits appeal to good desires, but that they are twisted. Remind them that Our Lady was sinless because she never fell for the counterfeit; she only loved. Her union with God was so deep that she gave the greatest life to the world: her son, Jesus, who heals us. From union to rupture to healing to eternal union: for this we were made.

Remember to pray for your child.

### **Prayer for Your Child**

*Dear God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
You have given us [name of your child], and we are called to  
love and care for him/her with our whole body and soul. Help  
us to show [name of your child] who he/she truly is in you!  
May the Theology of the Body guide us faithfully as a family.  
Amen.*

### **"Our Story" Prayer for Your Child**

*Mother Mary, you who refused to be mastered by the  
glamour of evil, pray for our family. Ask your son to give us  
strength to recognize evil and reject it. Jesus, help me face  
the sawdust of my life and heal me so I might better guide  
my child. Amen.*

### **Questions for Your Middle Schooler:**

1. Why do you think some kids in your class misbehave? What are they looking for? What do they think they will get by disobeying?
2. What do you think are the main temptations for people your age? What is the counterfeit that is tricking some of your friends?
3. When I was your age, I remember thinking that my parents were dumb, didn't understand me, and didn't want me to have any fun. Maybe I seem that way to you sometimes. But do you know that all I really want is what is best for you? Can we talk about some times lately when you thought I was unreasonable?
4. Remember that you learned that sin brings division. Do you feel the divisions created by sin? What is it like? Who is affected?

## FAMILY APPLICATIONS

- 1. Spiritual "I Spy":** Invite your child to join you in keeping a log of all of the glamorized, superficial temptations you and your child see every day. This is like a spiritual "I Spy" game. After a week, come back together to show each other what you found and how the temptations are counterfeits to good. You might have a contest for who can come up with the most.
- 2. Family Examination and Confession:** Explain to your child that in every sacrament, we meet Christ, who heals division. Before heading to confession, give your child an examination of conscience and tell him or her to bring a journal to write in. Explain that this journal is private, between your child and God, and that you will not read it. While in line for confession, model your own examination of conscience by writing in your own journal. Afterward, pray and journal in front of the Blessed Sacrament. When driving home, ask about what struck him or her most about the experience of forgiveness.





## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

For your child:

- *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis

For your own personal growth:

- *The Evidential Power of Beauty* by Fr. Thomas Dubay  
(Addresses how to foster a proper appreciation for real beauty)
- *Freedom: Twelve Lives Transformed by the Theology of the Body*, edited by Matthew Pinto
- *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis
- *Raising Pure Teens* by Jason Evert and Chris Stefanick

