

The Superpowers of Men and Women

PRO TIP
Download other grades for alternate activities!

**CONNECTIONS TO THE
CATECHISM OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

CCC 2333–2335

SUGGESTED TIME

45 minutes

MATERIALS

- ▶ [Every Superhero Has Powers](#)
- ▶ [God Designed Our Bodies with Superpowers](#)
- ▶ **Closing Meditation**
- ▶ Brief video clips at
 - [SophiaOnline.org/Incrediboy](https://www.sophiaonline.org/Incrediboy)
 - [SophiaOnline.org MyNamelsNotBuddy](https://www.sophiaonline.org/MyNamelsNotBuddy)
 - [SophiaOnline.org/GodMadeMeFast](https://www.sophiaonline.org/GodMadeMeFast)

Teacher Background

God creates each person male or female, and the Church teaches that everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. The vocation of love and communion between a married man and woman is revealed through their bodies. The gift of children is a possible outcome of this communion, and is in fact the primary purpose of marriage. All human generations proceed from this union.



HOW DOES THIS LESSON HELP INOCULATE STUDENTS AGAINST GENDER IDEOLOGY?

Gender ideology asserts that there is no design to our bodies; we just happen to have parts that may or may not be related to our so-called “gender identity.” The truth is that our bodies are designed by God for a reproductive role. The gifts God gives men are different than the gifts He gives women, but men and women are equal in dignity. God’s design of the male and female bodies, and His plan for them to come together in marriage, is so good and beautiful that it literally creates life.

Activity

- Begin by asking for a show of hands to find out who in your class is familiar with the Disney movie *The Incredibles*. Explain that you will show two brief clips from it. Note that in this film, superheroes are known as “Supers.” Unlike the fictional world of comic books where some individual superheroes do not have superpowers, such as Batman, in the world of *The Incredibles*, Supers are a category of people with inborn superpowers. Then show the brief clip from the movie available at SophiaOnline.org/Incrediboy followed by the short clip at SophiaOnline.org/MyNameIsNotBuddy.
- Then arrange your students into groups of three or four, give each group a copy of [Every Superhero Has Powers](#), and have them skim over the questions. (You may also wish to show the clips a second time). Then have students discuss the questions on [Every Superhero Has Powers](#) in their groups.
- When they have finished discussing, call on a few groups to share their responses with the class, using the answer key to guide the discussion.

Every Superhero Has Powers

Directions: Discuss the questions after watching the videos at SophiaOnline.org/Incrediboy and SophiaOnline.org/MyNameIsNotBuddy.



- In the film *The Incredibles*, those with inborn, natural superpowers are known as “Supers.” What superpowers did you see being exercised in the first clip?
- Who is Incrediboy?
- How is Buddy able to fly?
- How does Buddy’s flying compare to the superpower of flying?
- Why do you think young Buddy insists his name is not Buddy, but Incrediboy?
- Buddy is obviously smart enough to invent useful things. Why do you think he wanted to be “Incrediboy” rather than developing his talents as Buddy? Why all this effort not lead to the results he wants?
- Why do you think adult Buddy gets so angry about being called “Buddy”?
- Why do you think he goes on to choose yet another name, “Syndrome”?
- There are other superheroes with various powers in the movie (for example, Helen can stretch and reshape her body, Violet can turn invisible, her brother Dash has amazing speed, and baby Jack-Jack can burst into flames). Do those powers come from inventions or external modifications, or from the gifts of their own nature?
- Later in the film, Buddy says to his in-laws, “Oh, I’m not smart enough to defeat you! And I did it without your precious gifts, your oh-so-special powers.” What does he mean by “I’m not”? Could Buddy’s intellect and other, more powerful inventions ever turn him into a real Super in the world of *The Incredibles*? Most importantly, was there ever anything wrong with being Buddy?
- Remember that young Buddy was not a bad person and was in fact extraordinarily talented. What might you have said to a young Buddy, before he died to take on the “Incrediboy” identity, to keep him from going down this path?

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- D. Then, with students still in their groups, give each student a copy of **God Designed Our Bodies with Superpowers** and read aloud the information while students follow along.

Note: Approach this subject sensitively, as your students may come from families or know people who have struggled with infertility. Emphasize that men and women with disorders or injuries preventing them from having a child are no less men or women and their dignity is no way diminished. You can gently explain that those issues, as difficult as they can be, are recognized as challenges because they are outside of the healthy functioning of the male or female body. If this were not true, infertility would not be a disorder that we seek to treat. Although not every person may be able to become a mother or father naturally, a man's body and a woman's body are each designed with a special purpose to give and nurture life, be it physical or spiritual life.


God Designed Our Bodies with Superpowers

Directions: Read the information and then discuss the questions that follow.

God's design of the male and female bodies and His plan for them to come together in marriage, is so beautiful that I don't even know if I do not know to wonder whether marriage is a good thing, (or even whether it is a real thing), because the goodness of marital love is self-evident. It brings forth a new human being; life is good, and the union of a man and a woman in marriage gives life!

We can't help but bask in it, for we can think of our own bodies as being superpowers. God designed our bodies with gifts that enable a husband and wife to, in cooperation with Him, create life together. Men's bodies produce small-cell gametes (sperm) for their reproductive role as fathers. Women's bodies provide large-cell gametes (egg cells), and their bodies are designed to nurture (and, later, feed) growing babies: truly awe-inspiring superpowers!

A baby growing in her mother's uterus has superpowers of her own. Her body contains everything she needs to grow, while being nourished and protected by her mother's body. Note that the placenta and umbilical cord are not part of the mother's body—they are for the first nine months of life, part of the baby's body! When a baby is conceived, it will soon grow into a blastocyst, made up of about 100 cells; of those, only about a third will go on to form the baby's body. The rest



become the placenta and membranes. The placenta has seemingly miraculous powers. It keeps the mother and baby's bloodstreams separate and primes the mother's blood vessels to make it easier for blood to flow from her body to the placenta. Cells from the placenta actually burrow into the mother's blood vessels, and the mother's immune system does not attack the placenta, in the way that our bodies reject transplanted organs. Doctors still do not understand why, if they could unlock the secret power of the placenta, it might help many people who have received organ donations.


Through God's design for our bodies and plan for marriage is intended to bring

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- E. Read aloud the quote from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and call on a few students to put the ideas in your own words. Clarify any misunderstandings.
- F. Invite students to make the connection between the movie character they met today and the widespread modern belief that someone who is male can become female, or vice versa. Give students a few moments to discuss the questions at the bottom in their groups.
- G. Assign students to individually write their response to the last question for homework, with the help of their parents.
- H. Emphasize often that those who have a mistaken belief about their sex, or who identify as transgender, are not necessarily sinful, but misled. A person who holds a wrong belief about their sex should not be affirmed. We all have special gifts and talents that are given to us by God, including our sexual identity. When we attempt to reject that gift, we reject the Giver. When we develop our gifts and talents and use them for good, we give glory to God. We may even be able to feel God's pleasure when we live as He made us to be.

- I. Close by showing a brief clip from Chariots of Fire, available at [SophiaOnline.org/GodMadeMeFast](https://www.sophiaonline.org/GodMadeMeFast). Before playing the clip, explain that the film is based on the true story of an Olympic gold medalist runner. Briefly discuss how the actions of young Buddy from *The Incredibles* contrast with the ideas expressed by the speaker in this clip, Eric Lidell.
- J. Before departing, lead the class in the **Closing Meditation**.



TEACHER RESOURCE
Closing Meditation

Directions: Create a prayerful atmosphere and lead students through the meditation below.

Close your eyes and take a few moments to put yourself in God's presence.
...[Allow for 1-2 minutes of silence]...

Take a moment to think of all the things, gifts, or talents that you have been given and are able to enjoy or perform because you have a body. Thank God for each of those things.
...[Pause and allow for a moment of silence while students reflect on this]...

Is there a special gift or talent God has given you that you can (or would like to) feel its pleasure when you use it well? Thank God for that gift or talent.
...[Pause and allow for a moment of silence while students reflect on this]...

Take a moment to think of the gift of being either male or female. What gift are you most grateful for as a male or a female? Thank God for the sex He created you.
...[Pause again for a brief moment]...

Is there something you struggle with or are unhappy about your body or self-image? Know that you are beautiful and wonderfully made and God loves you deeply regardless of that. Ask God to help you love yourself and see yourself as He sees you. Ask Him to help you accept and love the things you cannot change about yourself and the wisdom, courage, and strength to develop and improve the things you can.
...[Pause again for a brief moment]...

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

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Every Superhero Has Powers

Directions: Discuss the questions after watching the videos at SophiaOnline.org/Incrediboy and SophiaOnline.org/MyNameIsNotBuddy.

- 1 In the film *The Incredibles*, those with inborn, natural superpowers are known as “Supers.” What superpowers did you see being exercised in the first clip?
- 2 Who is Incrediboy?
- 3 How is Buddy able to fly?
- 4 How does Buddy’s flying compare to the superpower of flying?
- 5 Why do you think young Buddy insists his name is not Buddy, but Incrediboy?
- 6 Buddy is obviously smart enough to invent useful things. Why do you think he wanted to be “Incrediboy” rather than developing his talents as Buddy? Why will this effort not lead to the results he wants?
- 7 Why do you think adult Buddy gets so angry about being called “Buddy”?
- 8 Why do you think he goes on to choose yet another name, “Syndrome”?
- 9 There are other superheroes with various powers in the movie (for example, Helen Parr can stretch and reshape her body, Violet Parr can turn invisible, her brother Dash has amazing speed, and baby Jack Jack can burst into flames!). Do those powers come from inventions or external modifications, or from the gifts of their own nature?
- 10 Later in the film, Buddy says to Mr. Incredible: “Oh, I’m real. Real enough to defeat you! And I did it without your precious gifts, your oh-so-special powers.” What does he mean by “I’m real”? Could Buddy’s rocket boots and later, more powerful inventions ever turn him into a real Super in the world of *The Incredibles*? Most importantly, was there ever anything wrong with being Buddy?
- 11 Remember that young Buddy was not a bad person and was in fact extraordinarily talented. What might you have said to a young Buddy, before he tried to take on the “Incrediboy” identity, to keep him from going down this path?



EVERY SUPERHERO HAS POWERS ANSWER KEY

1. Mr. Incredible: Strength (enough to leap from building to building, crash through glass windows uninjured, stop a train, etc.) Frozone: creating ice.
2. A boy named Buddy who idolizes Mr. Incredible and wants to be a superhero.
3. He invented rocket boots.
4. He is not really flying under his own power, i.e. through a gift of his own nature like a Super in the world of *The Incredibles* would; he can only appear to be doing so.
5. Because he has rejected his true identity and attempted to take on a new one.
6. Allow discussion. Emphasize that nothing we have seen makes young Buddy a bad person, he seems immature, misled, and wanting to be something he is not. But nothing he can do will change his nature into that of a real Super – i.e. a person with superpowers. Further, his dignity in his new identity apparently depends on being acknowledged (or affirmed) by others.
7. He has continued to reject his true identity. His anger could be akin to the cultural response to “deadnaming”, i.e. what gender ideology calls using someone’s name from before they “transitioned.”
8. He did not achieve the satisfaction he was seeking as “Incrediboy,” but has continued to reject his true identity in order to fashion yet another self-created one.
9. From the gifts of their own nature.
10. He believes he is a real Super (and again, in the world of *The Incredibles*, all superheroes have natural powers). But his inventions will never turn him into a real Super. There was never anything wrong with being Buddy.
11. Encourage responses that focus on helping Buddy see all his gifts and talents, don’t depend on others to know you have dignity, and/or to actively affirm any given self-created identity, and that trying to be something you are not only leads to pain.

God Designed Our Bodies with Superpowers

Directions: Read the information and then discuss the questions that follow.

God's design of the male and female bodies, and His plan for them to come together in marriage, is so beautiful that it literally creates life. We do not have to wonder whether marriage is a good thing, (or even whether it is a real thing), because the goodness of marital love is self-evident: it brings forth a new human being! Life is good, and the union of a man and a woman in marriage gives life!

We can't leap tall buildings or fly, but we can think of our own bodies as having superpowers: God designed our bodies with gifts that enable a husband and wife to, in cooperation with Him, create life together. Men's bodies produce small-cell gametes (sperm) for their reproductive role as fathers. Women's bodies provide large-cell gametes (egg cells), and their bodies are designed to nurture (and, later, feed) growing babies: truly awe-inspiring superpowers!

A baby growing in her mother's uterus has superpowers of her own. Her body contains everything she needs to grow, while being nourished and protected by her mother's body. Note that the placenta and umbilical cord are not part of the mother's body - they are, for the first nine months of life, part of the baby's body! When a baby is conceived, it will soon grow into a blastocyst, made up of about 120 cells. Of those, only about a third will go on to form the baby's body. The rest



become the placenta and membranes. The placenta has seemingly miraculous powers: it keeps the mothers' and babies' bloodstreams separate and primes the mother's blood vessels to make it easier for blood to flow from her body to the placenta. Cells from the placenta actually burrow into the mother's blood vessels, yet the mother's immune system does not attack the placenta, in the way that our bodies reject donated organs. Doctors still do not understand why. If they could unlock this secret power of the placenta, it might help many people who have received organ donations.

Though God's design for our bodies and plan for marriage is intended to bring

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

forth life, there are disorders and illnesses that can mean a person will not be able to have children. You may have friends or loved ones who have struggled with infertility. Men and women with health problems preventing them from having a child are no less men or women. Those problems, as heartbreaking as they can be, are recognized as problems precisely

because in those cases, the person's body is, sadly, unable to function as designed. If this were not the case, infertility would not be a disorder that causes great suffering, and one that we seek to treat in ways that respect God's design. A man's body and a woman's body are each designed with a special purpose to give and nurture life.

Discussion Questions

- 1 Will someone who is male ever produce egg cells?
- 2 Can any union other than that between a man and a woman produce life?
- 3 Just like young Buddy was not a bad person when he wanted to be the superhero "Incrediboy," a mistaken belief about one's sex or a desire to identify as transgender does not make someone a bad person. Look back at your response to the final question on the previous worksheet. How could you adapt your response to Buddy to someone who wants to reject their sexual identity and take on a transgender identity? Use the *Catechism* paragraphs below in your answer.

CCC 2333-2335

Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. Physical, moral, and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out.

In creating men "male and female," God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity. Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God.

Each of the two sexes is an image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way. The union of man and woman in marriage is a way of imitating in the flesh the Creator's generosity and fecundity. "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." All human generations proceed from this union.

GOD DESIGNED OUR BODIES WITH SUPERPOWERS ANSWER KEY

1. No
2. No
3. Answers should complement the answers they gave earlier, with the particulars changed to be about sexual identity.

The Superpowers of Men and Women

Every Superhero Has Powers

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Though God's design for our bodies and plan for marriage is intended to bring

forth life, there are disorders and illnesses that can mean a person will not be able to have children. You may have friends or loved ones who have struggled with infertility. Men and women with health problems preventing them from having a child are no less men or women. Those problems, as heartbreaking as they can be, are recognized as problems precisely

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Each of the two sexes is an image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way. The union of man and woman in marriage is a way of imitating in the flesh the Creator's generosity and fecundity: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." All human generations proceed from this union.

Closing Meditation

Directions: Create a prayerful atmosphere and lead students through the meditation below.

Close your eyes and take a few moments to put yourself in God's presence.

...(Allow for 1-2 minutes of silence)...

Take a moment to think of all the things, gifts, or talents that you have been given and are able to enjoy or perform because you have a body. Thank God for each of those things.

...(Pause and allow for a moment of silence while students reflect on this)...

Is there a special gift or talent God has given you that you can (or would like to) feel His pleasure when you do it well? Thank God for that gift or talent.

...(Pause and allow for a moment of silence while students reflect on this)...

Take a moment to think of the gift of being either male or female. What gift are you most grateful for as a male or a female? Thank God for the sex He created you.

...(Pause again for a brief moment)...

Is there something you struggle with or are unhappy about your body or self-image? Know that you are beautifully and wonderfully made and God loves you deeply regardless of that. Ask God to help you love yourself and see yourself as He sees you. Ask Him to help you accept and love the things you cannot change about yourself and the wisdom, courage, and strength to develop and improve the things you can.

...(Pause again for a brief moment)...

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

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Directions: Create a prayerful atmosphere and lead students through the meditation below.

Close your eyes and take a few moments to put yourself in God's presence.

...(Allow for 1-2 minutes of silence)...

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