

Family, Faith and Circle of Grace

Grade 3

Sacredness and Boundaries

Sometimes children reveal personal information or details about incidents that, in order to respect confidentiality, need to be handled outside of the group environment. If this happens, tell the child, "Thank you for sharing that, _____. That sounds really important. I will talk to you about that later (at the end of class, at the break, as soon as humanly possible, etc.)." When this happens, be sure you talk to the child at your first opportunity and alert the administration. Remember that you are the responsible reporter in cases of suspected abuse.

This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:

- Jesus is the Son of God
- God takes care of us and is always with us
- God created all human beings in His image, and He saw this as very Good
- God calls us to a loving relationship with Himself and with others
- The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Blessed Trinity. He can be understood as the love of the Father for the Son and the love of the Son for the Father
- The Holy Spirit helps us to live as Jesus did, making good choices
- God's creation is to be respected and as Christians we accept responsibility to care for it
- Jesus' life is a model for our own
- God calls us to be responsible for our actions
- God wants us to understand the importance of serving others as Jesus did
- God teaches us to lead a healthy life and to make good choices

Lesson Goal

The concept of Circle of Grace and boundaries will be reinforced.

Lesson Objectives

Children will be able to:

1. Understand and explain that as Children of God we are treasured and filled with grace. God's presence is within us and around us creating our own *Circle of Grace*.
2. Demonstrate their own *Circle of Grace*.

3. Understand that God does not want or cause bad things to happen to them and that God is with them when they are hurt or sad.
4. Identify what behaviors are appropriate within a *Circle of Grace* showing that they treasure themselves and others as Children of God.
5. Recognize boundary violations and what action is needed.
6. Be able to identify trusted adults in addition to their parents.

Vocabulary (*Below is a guide for the leader. Children are not expected to memorize them*)

1. **Children of God**: All people. We are all made by and loved by God.
2. **Circle of Grace**: The love and goodness of God within me and which always surrounds me and others.
3. **Grace**: The gift of God's goodness and love to help me live as His child.
4. **Holy**: Special because of a connection with God.
5. **Holy Spirit**: God present with and within me in a special way. The Holy Spirit helps me to remember that I belong to God. The Holy Spirit helps me to experience and live God's love.
6. **Respect**: Being kind to others and doing what's best for myself and others because I honor all people as Children of God.
7. **Symbol**: A picture or object that stands for something else.
8. **Treasured**: We are so unique and precious that we could not be replaced in God's eyes.
9. **Boundary**: The borders or limits we need to keep ourselves safe within our *Circle of Grace*.
10. **Feelings**: Something I sense inside myself (e.g., angry, sad, happy, afraid, embarrassed, confused, excited, peaceful, etc.) which gives me information about others or myself.
11. **Safe**: I am safe when my body and my feelings are respected by me and by others.
12. **Secret**: A secret is something I know but do not tell.
13. **Safe Secret**: A secret is safe when it does not hurt others or me.
14. **Safe Touch**: Touch that respects me and others.
15. **Unsafe**: Anything that causes harm to me or others.
16. **Unsafe secret**: A secret is unsafe when I think that someone, including me, might be hurt or get in trouble if I do not tell.
17. **Unsafe Touch**: Touch that is disrespectful and hurts, scares, or makes me feel uncomfortable or confused.
18. **Signal**: A sign that tells me something may be safe or unsafe. This may be internal or external.
19. **Trust**: Being able to count on someone to help me to stay safe within my *Circle of Grace*.
20. **Trusted Adult**: A grown-up who helps me to stay safe in my *Circle of Grace* and to respect others within their *Circle of Grace*.
21. **Violate**: To break a law, promise, or boundary

PART 1- Required

Materials Needed

1. Photos or props of precious things that are cared for and protected
2. Whiteboard or chalkboard
3. Box that is wrapped with a bow (box and lid wrapped separately with some sort of mirror that is secured inside)
4. Plain paper
5. Copy of "The Summary of Key Concepts of *Circle of Grace*" handout for each youth (located at the end of the lesson).
6. Copy of the colored *Circle of Grace* Logo for leader to display (located at the end of the lesson).

Getting Started

1. *Vocabulary is a guide for the leader. Children are not expected to memorize them. Have the color Circle of Grace Logo displayed.*
2. *Distribute "The Summary of Key Concepts of Circle of Grace" to the youth. Discuss briefly what belongs in your Circle of Grace and what does not belong in it. Give some examples.*

Lesson Development

Today we are going to discuss how God treasures all of us by giving each of us a *Circle of Grace*.

- *Show students pictures or examples of precious items that, because they are so special, receive extra care. Possibilities might include:*
 - *The American Flag*
 - *A rare collector's item like a gold coin or an autographed baseball that might be kept in a glass case under lock and key*
 - *A vintage automobile that is kept in a heated garage and only driven on days when the weather is good*
 - *The Declaration of Independence which is kept in a climate controlled case under bulletproof glass*
 - *A special set of china dishes that are a family heirloom*
 - *Ask the children for other examples, write them on the board or poster paper.*

Make a point that everything that is considered extra special, rare, or valuable is given extra care and protection.

- The final and MOST IMPORTANT example of care given to a precious item is the special measures taken to protect and care for it.
 - A Consecrated Host, The Blessed Sacrament
 - Not only do we keep it in a special vessel and in a special locked box but also when we handle it we do so with the ultimate reverence and respect.
 - We even build a special building, the church, where it is housed, and there are many special behaviors for when we are in the presence of Christ in The Blessed Sacrament.
 - *Ask students for examples of special behaviors we use in church to show respect.*
 - *Folding hands*
 - *Kneeling*
 - *Bowing heads*
 - *Genuflecting*
 - *Reverent silence*

Activity - Precious Gift-Wrapped Box

(Use a box with a lid that you can wrap. Inside the box secure a mirror of some sort so that the students will see their reflection when they look inside the box.)

- *Show the children a gift-wrapped box. Tell them: "It contains something very precious, something that both you and God treasure very highly. This is so special, unique, and valuable that it should be handled with the highest level of care and respect. Each of us should do everything in our power to keep it safe."*
 - You are invited to come up one at a time and look into the box, to see this precious gift.
 - Once you have seen the contents of the box, don't tell anyone else what you have seen. The beauty of the gift is that everyone will see something very different.
 - *While they are waiting to take their turn to view the special gift, have the children make a list of their ten most precious possessions.*

Discussion

After they have all had a chance to look in the box, say: Most of the time when we think of people who need special care we think of the following.

- Unborn or Newborn Baby
- The Elderly
- People with special needs

It is important to remember that all of us are deserving of this special care and respect.

- This constant loving presence of God is called “grace”. It is as though we carry our own little church with us wherever we go.

Why should we consider ourselves as a precious and special gift deserving of a special care and respect? *Allow a few responses.*

Emphasize the following points:

- We are made by God. We are all Children of God.
- We are all made by God and in His own image and likeness which means that we are made for the purpose of loving God, ourselves, and others and doing good.
- God promised that as His children we will always be in His presence and surrounded by His love (*Circle of Grace*). He promised this because He wants a close relationship with each of us.
 - Even when we are not in our family home, we are each still a member of our family (belonging) and the love of our family goes with us.
 - We belong to the family of God, so even when we are not in the church building, we are always Children of God.
 - God’s loving presence goes with us wherever we go.
 - This constant loving presence of God is called “grace”. It is as though we carry our own little church with us wherever we go.

Summary of part 1

- We are all precious in the eyes of God and live in God’s love and goodness because we are all God’s children.
- As God’s children, we are deserving of special care from others and ourselves.
- The *Circle of Grace* in which we live and breathe is a holy place where some things belong and others do not.

PART 2 Required

Materials Needed

1. Whiteboard, chalkboard or flipchart
2. Copies of “Boundary Scenarios” for small groups (located at the end of the lesson)
3. Parent take home letter for each child (at the end of the lesson)

Getting Started

It is important to begin the lesson by explaining that God does not want or cause bad things to happen. There will be young people who have already experienced unsafe or hurtful situations. It is important to reinforce that it is not their fault, and it is never too late to tell a trusted adult. We want our young people to understand that God is with them and for them even when they are hurting or sad.

Lesson Development

Boundary: The borders or limits we need to keep ourselves safe within our *Circle of Grace*.

Signal: A sign that tells me something may be safe or unsafe. This may be internal or external.

Feelings: Something I sense inside myself (e.g., angry, sad, happy, afraid, embarrassed, confused, excited, peaceful, etc.) which gives me information about others or myself.
Review the definition of a boundary, signal, and feelings. Introduce the concept that boundaries are there to keep us safe.

Discussion

- We are now going to talk about words and actions that belong and don't belong in our *Circle of Grace*.
- The Holy Spirit loves us and wants us to be safe.
- Our parents and leaders also want us to be safe and teach us to maintain healthy boundaries.
- Sometimes a person gives us lots of good signals that make us seem like we can trust them, but we may still have an uncomfortable feeling that something may be wrong.
- **We should pay attention to this feeling.** It may be a signal from the Holy Spirit to help keep us safe.
- Most of the time we know what is safe and good to allow into our *Circle of Grace*.
- When a person ignores boundaries, sometimes someone may be harmed physically or emotionally.
- **When you are unsure or have confusing feelings, you need to ask a trusted adult to help you.**

Boundaries Can Be Physical, Symbolic, or Internal

We will now talk about the boundaries that are the borders or limits we need to protect ourselves within our *Circle of Grace*. (As you go through the examples below, it is important to relate them to the children's safety.)

Write "Physical", "Symbolic", and "Internal" on the board. During the discussion, write which items belong under each boundary heading.

Physical: An actual barrier that blocks or restricts something. (Give 2 or 3 examples)

- Fence (*defines property*)
- Bathroom/bedroom door (*can be shut and locked to respect privacy*)
- Clothes (*protect our bodies from elements and covers private areas*)
- School Building (*secures learning environment, doors, alarms, school office*)
- Home (*keep family secure: alarm system, protection from the weather*)
- Seat Belt (*protects our body if there is an accident*)
- Password on an electronic device

Symbolic: A limit you can see that does not physically restrict you. You can choose to respect or ignore this limit. (Give 2 or 3 examples)

- Playing Field (*visual lines to help play fairly*)
- "Do Not Enter" Sign (*privacy or potential danger alert*)
- A Crosswalk (*a guide as to where to safely walk*)
- PG 13 movie rating (*an alert regarding mature content*)
- Video game with a parental warning on the label (*a warning of mature and violent content*)
- "No Trespassing" Sign (*alerts you to stop and keep out of another's property*)

Internal: An understanding of a rule or limit that you carry in your head. Most of these are learned through experience or taught by those who care for us. The Holy Spirit nudges us to remember our internal limits in order to help us be safe. (Give 2 or 3 examples)

- Acceptable volume on a radio or CD player (*respects others sensitivity to noise*)
- Space between you and an unknown or known person (*this space could vary depending on culture, family, and current relationship*)
- You stop eating when you are full (*an internal sensation that no more food is needed*)
- Not playing in the street (*internal limit regarding danger taught by those who care for us*)
- Knowing not to participate in an activity your parents would not approve (*internal limit based on prior parental guidance*)
- Appropriate behavior in church and school (*internal limit based on prior adult guidance*)

Ask the youth to give additional examples of each boundary category. Add them to the list on the board. Next, have the youth label the boundaries (1,2,3) as they relate to safety:

1-keeps you safe

2-may keep you safe

3-not related to safety.

The next page has some photos to illustrate physical, symbolic and internal boundaries.

Examples of Physical, Symbolic and Internal Boundaries



Activity – Boundary Scenarios and Discussion Guide (*located in the end of the lesson*).

Review safe and unsafe touch and safe and unsafe secrets from the vocabulary

1. *The scenario questions are provided to help facilitate the discussion and to encourage children to identify safe and unsafe situations.*
2. *Begin by discussing scenario number 1, the bedroom door scenario, with the large group.*
3. *Divide the students in pairs or small groups. Assign one or two boundary scenarios (and the questions following it) to each group for discussion. If you have a small class, you can do all the scenarios in a large group.*
4. *Come back to the large group and discuss the scenarios in more depth. For each scenario, have groups present their responses to the questions following the scenario (below).*
 - a. *Has a Circle of Grace boundary been crossed? Ask the students to stand if they believe it **IS** a boundary violation, stay sitting in their chair if they are **NOT SURE**, or sit on the floor if they believe that is **NOT** a boundary violation. Lead a discussion of why they chose the different responses.*
 - b. *How would you feel if this were to happen? Why?*
 - c. *If this boundary was crossed, what could you do?*
 - d. *What would be needed to make this situation safe?*

Write on the board the 3 Step Action Plan:

1- Voice that a boundary has been violated:

Please get out of my Circle of Grace

2- If it does not stop or they don't leave:

You could say your parents are expecting you home as you walk away

3- Tell a trusted adult

It is important to discuss the situation as soon as you can

Don't believe someone if they say you can't tell because it is a secret.

Review each step with the students. You can use the scenarios to give examples.

Activity- Safety Plan

1. *Divide the students in pairs or small groups. Assign one or two boundary scenarios to each group. They will need to discuss examples of how to use the 3-step action plan for each scenario. If you have a small class, you can do all the scenarios in a large group.*
2. *Have one person from each group report the examples to the class.*

Discussion

Now that we've discussed the three-part action plan, let's discuss what a trusted adult is and how we choose them.

Distribute the "3 Step Action" sheet. Go over the following with the students:

- It is a good idea to have a list of three adults, in addition to your parents, that you know you can trust and ask for their help.
- Talk this over with your parents and make your list together. Be sure that you are comfortable and feel safe with the three identified adults.
- In some situations, it may not be as clear to you whether someone is really a threat to your *Circle of Grace* or not. The person may seem really nice but is acting in a way that makes you uncomfortable. This is the time to talk to a trusted adult.
- One warning signal would be if a person asks you to keep a secret from your parents or family. Sometimes we just get an uneasy feeling when something happens, and we are not really sure why.
- **It is important NOT to ignore these feelings/signals.** They can be one way the Holy Spirit is letting us know we need to take care of ourselves within our *Circle of Grace*.
- **These are times when it is important to go to one of the trusted adults on your list and ask for advice or help.**
- If a person is pressuring you or asking you not to tell anyone about what they are doing (or asking you to do), it is always important to say, "No," until you can talk to a trusted adult. They can help you decide if the situation is safe and healthy for you. A true trusted adult would always want to help keep you safe from harm.

Activity

Leader gives each student a "3 Step Action Plan" (at the end of the lesson)

Review the 3 steps.

1. Use your voice, say "Please get out of my *Circle of Grace*."
2. Remove yourself from the situation- walk away
3. Tell a trusted adult. (My trusted adults are _____
_____, _____.)

Wrapping Up

Give the students some time to identify and write down their trusted adult.

Ask the students "Would anyone like to share who their trusted adults are and why they picked them?"

Remember to attach "3 Step Action Plan" to the Parent Take Home letter.



Summary of the Key Concepts of “Circle of Grace”



God gives each of us a Circle of Grace where He is always Present:

Raise your hands above your head, then bring your outstretched arms slowly down.

*Extend your arms in front of you and then behind you embrace all of the space around you
slowly reach down to your feet.*

Know that God is in this space with you. This is your Circle of Grace; you are in it.

God is Present because He desires a relationship with us.

- God is with us when we are happy and sad. God does not cause bad things to happen to us. He loves us very much.
- God desires to help us when we are hurt, scared or confused (unsafe).
- Having faith may not take away all of life's struggles. It is because of these struggles, God promised to always be present; providing guidance and comfort in our time of need.

God helps us know what belongs in our Circle of Grace

- Our feelings help us know about ourselves and the world around us.
- God helps us know what belongs in our Circle of Grace by experiencing peace, love or contentment when something or someone good comes into our Circle of Grace.

God helps us know what does not belong in our Circle of Grace

- God desires to help us when we are hurt, scared or confused (unsafe).
- The Holy Spirit prompts (alerts) us that something does not belong in our Circle of Grace by giving us “a funny or uncomfortable feeling” that something is not safe. This feeling is there because God wants us to be safe.

God helps us know when to ask for help from someone we trust.

- God gives us people in our lives to help us
- God wants us to talk to trusted adults about our worries, concerns or “funny/ uncomfortable feelings” so they can help us be safe.

Boundary Scenarios and Discussion Guide

1. BEDROOM DOOR

Your parents are out for the night. You are in your bedroom getting ready for bed with your door shut. Your babysitter comes in your room without knocking and you feel uncomfortable.

- a. Has there been a boundary crossed? How does it affect your *Circle of Grace*? Why?
- b. How would you feel if this were to happen? Why?
- c. If this boundary were violated, what can you do?
- d. What would be needed to make this situation safe?

2. TOUCH

You are at a family reunion and a relative pulls you on his/her lap and starts tickling you in a way that makes you uncomfortable.

- a. Has there been a boundary crossed? How does it affect your *Circle of Grace*? Why?
- b. How would you feel if this were to happen? Why?
- c. If this boundary were violated, what can you do?
- d. What would be needed to make this situation safe?

3. HOME (YOURS OR OTHERS)

You are at a friend's house and your friend has an R-rated movie on the computer for you to watch together. When you say your parents don't want you watching this kind of show your friend laughs and says, "If you don't tell them, they'll never know."

- a. Has there been a boundary crossed? How does it affect your *Circle of Grace*? Why?
- b. How would you feel if this were to happen? Why?
- c. If this boundary were violated, what can you do?
- d. What would be needed to make this situation safe?

4. SPACE BETWEEN YOU AND A KNOWN OR UNKNOWN PERSON

Your coach always asks you to stay after practice so the two of you can talk. He doesn't do that with anyone else on the team and sometimes when he's talking to you, you feel uncomfortable with how close he sits or stands by you.

- a. Has there been a boundary crossed? How does it affect your *Circle of Grace*? Why?
- b. How would you feel if this were to happen? Why?
- c. If this boundary were violated, what can you do?
- d. What would be needed to make this situation safe?

5. THE RULES OR LIMITS YOUR PARENTS HAVE SET FOR YOU

An adult you know has become very friendly to you. The extra attention and kind words make you feel special. Lately, he or she has been giving you small gifts and ask you not to tell your parents because they would not understand your special relationship.

- a. Has there been a boundary crossed? How does it affect your *Circle of Grace*? Why?
- b. How would you feel if this were to happen? Why?
- c. If this boundary were violated, what can you do?
- d. What would be needed to make this situation safe?

3 Step Action Plan

Circle of Grace: Third Grade

Personal 3 Step Action Plan: steps to take to protect yourself:

1. Use your voice, say “Please get out of my *Circle of Grace*”
2. Remove yourself from the situation- walk away
3. Tell a trusted adult.

My trusted adults in addition to my parents are:

1. _____ Phone: _____

2. _____ Phone: _____

3. _____ Phone: _____

Family, Faith and Circle of Grace

Parent Take Home Letter (Includes Child's Activity Sheets)

Sacredness and Boundaries

Dear Parent,

Your child has been taught the "Sacredness and Boundaries" Grade 3 lesson. The goal of this lesson is that children understand their Circle of Grace, being made in God's image and boundaries both safe and unsafe. They are given scenarios to discern what action may need to be taken. We talked about borders or limits needed to protect them within their *Circle of Grace*. Below are the vocabulary words being used in this lesson.

Part 1:

Children of God: All people. We are all made by and loved by God.

Circle of Grace: The love and goodness of God within me and which always surrounds me and others.

Grace: The gift of God's goodness and love to help me live as his child.

Holy: Special because of a connection with God.

Holy Spirit: God present with and within me in a special way. The Holy Spirit helps me to remember that I belong to God. The Holy Spirit helps me to experience and live God's love.

Respect: Being kind to others and doing what's best for myself and others because I honor all people as Children of God.

Symbol: A picture or object that stands for something else.

Treasured: We are so unique and precious that we could not be replaced in God's eyes.

Boundary: The borders or limits we need to keep ourselves safe within our *Circle of Grace*.

Part 2:

Feelings: Something I sense inside myself (e.g., angry, sad, happy, afraid, embarrassed, confused, excited, peaceful, etc.) which gives me information about others or myself.

Safe: I am safe when my body and my feelings are respected by me and by others.

Secret: A secret is something I know but do not tell.

Safe Secret: A secret is safe when it does not hurt others or me.

Safe Touch: Touch that respects me and others.

Unsafe: Anything that causes harm to me or others.

Unsafe secret: A secret is unsafe when I think that someone, including me, might be hurt or get in trouble if I do not tell.

Unsafe Touch: Touch that is disrespectful and hurts, scares, or makes me feel uncomfortable or confused.

Signal: A sign that tells me something may be safe or unsafe. This may be internal or external.

Trust: Being able to count on someone to help me to stay safe within my *Circle of Grace*.

Trusted Adult: A grown-up who helps me to stay safe in my *Circle of Grace* and to respect others within their *Circle of Grace*.

Violate: To break a law, promise, or boundary.

It is important as parents and guardians to dialogue with your child about how he or she understands these concepts. This lesson will help them begin to understand to seek help in situations that may make them uncomfortable or unsure. It may be helpful to come up with additional situations that you and your child can discuss.

Your child was given a 3 Step Action Plan to share with you:

- 1- Use your voice, say "Please get out of my *Circle of Grace*"
- 2- Remove yourself from the situation
- 3- Tell a trusted adult. (My trusted adults are _____,
_____, _____.)

Please discuss with your child the people on his/her list. If your child names someone you find inappropriate, please help him/her to identify someone else. Provide phone numbers of these people so that your child may write them down on their Personal Action Plan Card.

It is a good idea to contact these individuals to let them know you and your child have identified them as trusted adults. Being identified as a "trusted adult" will most likely make them feel honored as well as alert them to your safety plan for your child.

Your child should put this list in a safe place where they can have easy access to it if they would need it.

To help your child be well prepared to use the Action Plan in a range of possible situations, we offer you a few other scenarios that would be good to discuss with your child.

1. You are at a friend's house, and they start to watch an R-rated movie. What do you do?
2. You are walking home and notice that a car is slowly following you. What do you do?
3. Someone you don't know well is offering to take you home from practice and says you can get an ice cream on the way home. What do you do?
4. You are on the internet and pictures, or words come up on the screen that make you uncomfortable. What do you do?
5. You're riding your bike around the neighborhood on a really hot day and a neighbor you don't really know invites you to come inside their air-conditioned house to get a cold pop. What do you do?
6. You're invited to a friend's house but know his or her parents won't be home. What do you do?

Thank you for helping us help you keep your child safe!

Family Faith and Circle of Grace *Grade 3 Evaluation*

Date _____

Parish/School _____

City _____

Leader _____ *Number of young people in*
class _____

Each grade's curriculum was designed to meet the overall program objectives.

Please check if each of the objectives of the *Circle of Grace* Program were met.

1. YES _____ NO _____ Children understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. YES _____ NO _____ Children will be able to describe the *Circle of Grace* that God gives each of us.
3. YES _____ NO _____ Children will be able to identify and maintain appropriate boundaries.
4. YES _____ NO _____ Children can identify types of boundary violations.
5. YES _____ NO _____ Children can demonstrate how to take action if a boundary is threatened or violated.

Please list what worked well and any resources that you would like to share (use back if necessary).

Please list any suggestions that would improve lessons (use back if necessary).

Return to your School Administrator or Director of Religious Education