

Family, Faith and Circle of Grace

Grade 8

Moral Responsibility in Today's Culture: How Hard Can It Be?

Sometimes young people reveal personal information or details about incidents that, in order to respect confidentiality, need to be handled outside of the classroom. If this happens, tell the young person, "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 young person 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:

- Belief in the works and presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- Christian faith requires a relationship with God and others
- We are called to model our faith in our words and actions
- We are called to make moral decisions consistent with Catholic teaching
- Vocations are God's call to all
- We are all Children of God because of God's creation and covenants
- Individual and cultural differences are gifts from God that should be respected
- Responsible relationships are based on love, honesty, and respect
- Skills such as listening, self-disclosure and compromise are necessary for faith filled communications with others

Lesson Goal

Students will identify values that reflect moral decisions.

Lesson Objectives

Young People will be able to:

1. Recognize that Christians have specific moral values
2. Identify those values and how they fit into their *Circle of Grace*
3. Understand those values and how they may oppose cultural values
4. Recognize that our understanding of values assists us in keeping appropriate boundaries in our *Circle of Grace*
5. Know how to seek help when something unsafe threatens their *Circle of Grace*

Vocabulary

1. **Value**: A principle, standard, or quality considered desirable.
2. **Morality**: The way we put our beliefs into action for good.
3. **Conscience**: The gift from God that helps us to know the difference between right and wrong.
4. **Trust**: Being able to count on someone to help me to stay safe within my *Circle of Grace*.
5. **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*.
6. **Respect**: Being kind to others and doing what is best for myself and others because I honor all people as Children of God.
7. **Circle of Grace**: The love and goodness of God that always surrounds me and all others.
8. **Sexuality**: Everything that makes us female or male. This includes feelings, attitudes, values, relationships, and ideas.
9. **Modesty**: The virtue that respects, honors, and protects privacy: the quality of avoiding extremes of emotion, action, dress, and language. Modesty respects my boundaries and the boundaries of others.

Materials Needed

1. A Bible for reference if needed
2. A Catechism of the Catholic Church for reference if needed
3. Vocabulary Activity Sheet for each young person (at the end of the lesson).
4. Ten Commandments Activity Sheet for each young person (at the end of the lesson)
5. Don't be DUPED Safety Plan for each student (at the end of the lesson).
6. Parent Take Home Letter and the "Take Home - Ten Commandments" Activity Sheet (at the end of the lesson).
7. A blank sheet of paper for each young person.
8. White board or chalk board.

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.

Review the “Summary of the Key Concepts of “Circle of Grace” (at the end of the lesson). Explain how God is present with us and within us. He wants the best for us in all things. The Circle of Grace concept helps us realize His love for us and desire to keep us safe.

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 allowing us to experience 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 when we are troubled or struggling with a concern.
- God wants us to talk to trusted grownups about our worries, concerns or funny/uncomfortable feelings so they can help us be safe and take the right action.

Discuss how their understanding of the Circle of Grace has changed or remained the same.

1. There may be some things you liked in your *Circle of Grace* when you were younger but do not like now. *Example: endearing family nicknames.*
2. We are always changing, but God’s love is constant and forever present.

Vocabulary Large Group Activity

Present the definition of Circle of Grace. Ask the group what would our culture say about this concept?

Next, distribute the Vocabulary Activity Sheet. Complete the worksheet with the large group.

Example: We value life, what does the culture value? i.e., money, pleasure, etc. Write answers on the board.

Lesson Development

Introduction

- Discuss and define “Catholic Values” and list them on the board.
- Use the Ten Commandments Activity Sheet as a guideline (at the end of Lesson).

What are some ways we learn about the values of today’s “Popular Culture”?

Make a list on the board, i.e.. news, TV, social media, movies, friends.

Today we are going to compare and contrast our Catholic values with what popular culture tells us is important. For example, our Catholic faith teaches us to put God first and worship only Him. On the other hand, popular culture often teaches us to put ourselves first, not God. The Ten Commandment Activity Sheet will help you begin to compare and contrast.

1. **Divide students into small groups.** Hand out the Ten Commandments Activity Sheets to each group member. They will discuss and fill out the activity sheet as a group. Each group will identify someone to write their answers down.
2. When the activity sheet is completed by the group, give each student a blank sheet of paper and have them make a personal list of what they value, both concrete and abstract (e.g. friends, family, faith, music, and independence.)
3. **Bring students back to the large group.** Have them share what their group wrote on the activity sheet.
4. Talk specifically about Catholic moral values and how they compare to popular culture’s values.
5. Discuss how both sets of values relate to the sacredness of the Circle of Grace.
6. Direct the young people to look at their personal list of values. Where do these values fit into the Circle of Grace?
7. Discuss how some things might fit into both sets of values. For example, you have a friend who drinks. You value the friendship but must set boundaries as to how you spend time together. Always talk to a trusted adult.
8. Provide the student with the Parent Take Home Letter and Ten Commandments Activity Sheet. Instruct the students to complete the activity sheet a second time with their parents and have their parents sign off on it. Students are to turn in the signed worksheet next family faith formation gathering.

Discussion - Being Morally Responsible

1. Who or what helps you to make the right choices or decisions based on Catholic values? According to the Ten Commandments, what behaviors are right and what behaviors are wrong? What choices should you make based on the discussion about the Ten Commandments?
2. Why is it sometimes hard to follow your Catholic values over cultural values?
3. What are some ways we can resist the pressure to choose popular cultural values over what our Catholic values? (*List on the board.*)
4. *Remind the students that sometimes others break the Commandments which has a negative effect on others wellbeing and safety. This is why we need a safety plan ahead of time that we can follow when we are concerned or uncomfortable.*
5. *Distribute the “Don’t be DUPED Safety Plan” to students (at the end of the lesson).*

Discussion- There will be times when you in an uncomfortable situation or being bullied that a safety plan is needed. We will be discussing the plan and the acronym DUPE. Each letter reminds you of important steps that you need to take to be safe in your Circle of Grace. Remember, you are never too old to understand and respect your and others Circle of Grace. God is always that close to us and wanting to help us.

Let’s answer some questions as we review the “Don’t be Duped “Safety Plan.

- Have you and/or a friend ever thought a person was cool, but then observed behavior and comments that made you unsure?
- Have you and/or a friend ever hung out with others when the group decided to do something that you knew was wrong?
- Have you or a friend communicated to someone through an app/internet who is asking embarrassing questions?
- Have you and/or a friend had someone you met through an app/internet ask you to meet them?
- Have you and/or your friend been asked to keep a secret from your family?

Have the students take the Don’t be DUPED Safety Plan home to review with their parents.

Vocabulary Activity Sheet

List a value in popular culture that may be in conflict with each vocabulary word.

FAITH'S PERSPECTIVE

CULTURE'S PERSPECTIVE

<p>1. Value - A principle, standard, or quality considered desirable.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>As Catholics we value "life".</i></p>	
<p>2. Conscience - The gift from God that helps us to know the difference between right and wrong.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>A conscience helps us stay close to God.</i></p>	
<p>3. Sexuality - Everything that makes us female or male. This includes feelings, attitudes, values, relationships, and ideas.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Our sexuality is never separate from who we are as children of God</i></p>	
<p>4. Modesty - The virtue that respects, honors, and protects privacy; the quality of avoiding extremes of emotion, action, dress, and language.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Appearance and actions are consistent with who we really are</i></p>	
<p>5. Morality - The way we put our beliefs into action for good.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Our faith is evident by our actions</i></p>	
<p>6. Trust - Counting on someone to help us to stay safe within our <i>Circle of Grace</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Our trust is in the Lord</i></p>	
<p>7. Respect - Being kind to others and doing what is best for ourselves and others because we honor all people as Children of God.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Golden Rule</i></p>	

Ten Commandments Activity Sheet

List a value in popular culture that may be in conflict with each commandment.

OUR FAITH'S 10 COMMANDMENTS

POPULAR CULTURE'S TOP COMMANDMENTS

1. I am the LORD your God: You shall not have strange gods before me. <i>-Put God first, worship only HIM</i>	
2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. <i>-Use God's name with respect</i>	
3. Remember to keep the Lord's Day Holy. <i>-Mass on Sunday and Holy Days</i>	
4. Honor your father and mother. <i>-Respect your parents</i>	
5. You shall not kill. <i>-Do not hurt others physically or emotionally</i>	
6. You shall not commit adultery. <i>-Be faithful in marriage; respect the dignity of the body</i>	
7. You shall not steal. <i>-Respect other's belongings</i>	
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. <i>-Do not lie, gossip or spread rumors</i>	
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. <i>-All are called to respect the relationship between a husband and a wife</i>	
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods. <i>-Do not be envious of what others possess</i>	

“TAKE HOME” Ten Commandments Activity Sheet

Parents are to do this take home activity with their child. List a value in popular culture that may be in conflict with each commandment. When completed, please sign and return to the parish/ school.

Parent signature: _____

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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

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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.

“DON’T BE DUPED” SAFETY PLAN

We want you to remember this safety plan by using the acronym DUPE.

1. *Write on the board*

D- Discern

U- Understand

P- Protect

E- Execute your plan

Read each question allowing a few moments for quiet reflection before discussing

The letter “D” stands for Discern

- What prompting is the Holy Spirit giving you about this person or situation?
- Does this person or situation respect your Circle of Grace?
- What would your parents or others who love you say about this situation?
- What trusted adult can you talk to about the situation?

The letter “U” stands for Understand

- In every situation we need to remember that the Holy Spirit is always with us to help us stay safe.
- The Holy Spirit gives us feelings or instincts and we need to listen to them.
- Understanding a situation and our response to it requires us to listen to the Holy Spirit, our family and friends.
- Answering the following questions will help you understand if a relationship is healthy and belongs in our Circle of Grace
 1. How long have you known this person?
 2. Is your knowledge of this person face-to-face?
 3. How much do you know about this person?
 4. How have you verified what this person has told you about themselves?
 5. What do your feelings (instincts) tell you about this person or situation?
 6. How many things do you have in common with this person?
 7. Is the relationship respectful of your boundaries and the other person’s?
 8. Are you able to say, “No,” to this person?
 9. Does this person’s age or status influence your behavior in the relationship?
 10. Does this person ever ask you to keep secrets?

The Letter P stands for Protect

Part of protecting oneself in uncomfortable situations is to know the following 3 key areas That may make a situation or person unsafe. They are:

Unequal Power

- Are they significantly older, more popular, or a bigger size than you?
- Are they in a position of authority?
- Do they have access to more resources such as money, knowledge, car etc. than you?

Secrecy

- Are they asking you to keep secrets from your parents, friends or other adults?
- Are they asking you to not to tell about gifts, time together on line, in person or activities you do together?
- Do they say no one will understand your relationship?

Forced Isolation-

- Do they get angry when you want to hang out with your friends?
- Are they angry if you don't answer your phone or text right away?
- Do you feel like they are trying to control you with their words and actions?

The letter "E" is for Execute your plan

- There are other things you can do to protect your *Circle of Grace* when your parents or trusted adults may not be around. Some of them are:
 1. Don't reveal personal information on the internet/social media. That includes full names, school, grade, address, phone number, sports teams, church groups, etc. Perpetrators try to identify young people by learning about their activities and schedule patterns. Be particularly cautious of social networking websites such as myspace.com and personal blogs.
 2. Stay away or get away from situations that make you feel uncomfortable.
 3. Tactics may include saying, "No," walking away, calling a parent.
 4. Avoid unsafe situations, which involve alcohol, drugs, or smoking.
 5. Be cautious about situations in which one is left alone with a not well-known adult.
- To protect your *Circle of Grace*, you need to tell trusted adults you need help.
- Notify your parents or another trusted adult whenever someone has violated your boundaries, such as manipulating to control you or not respecting your *Circle of Grace* or someone else's *Circle of Grace*.

Continue by saying:

Trusted adults want what is best for you; they want your Circle of Grace to be respected. Discuss with your parents the three other persons whom you feel are trusted adults. Then let the trusted adults know you have chosen them. Share with them what Circle of Grace means to you and the safety plan, "Don't be Duped". Today is a good day to start those conversations.

Family, Faith and Circle of Grace
Parent Take Home Activity
Moral Responsibility in Today's Culture
How Hard Can It Be?

Dear Parent,

We presented the *Circle of Grace* lesson " **Moral Responsibility in Today's Culture: How Hard Can It Be?** to your child.

The goal of the lesson was to help the children recognize how popular culture can influence our *Circle of Grace*. Popular culture can have a positive or negative influence in our desire to obey the Ten Commandments and live our faith to its fullest.

Please complete and sign the Ten Commandment activity sheet with your child. The activity sheet needs to be returned at your child's next session.

Thank you for your support of the *Circle of Grace* program. It is essential and appreciated as we strive to provide the safest possible environment for our children.

Also, your child was taught the safety plan "Don't be Duped" Below is the explanation:

Acronym DUPE:

D- Discern (Listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and what others are saying, when uncomfortable, ask questions i.e. does this belong in my Circle of Grace?)

U- Understand (Think about consequences, ask questions about the situation, and seek opinions from trusted adults)

P- Protect (part of protecting oneself is to know if the following key areas are present: 1)unequal power, 2) secrecy, or 3) forced isolation)

E- Execute your plan (remove yourself from the situation, if possible, notify your parents or another trusted adult when you are uncomfortable)

Ask your child about the class discussion and potential situations which they may have to remember this safety acronym.

Thank you for your support of the *Circle of Grace* program. It is essential and appreciated as we strive to provide the safest possible environment for our children.

Family, Faith and Circle of Grace
Moral Responsibility in Today's Culture:
How Hard Can It Be?

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 whether the objectives of the *Circle of Grace* Program were met.

1. YES ____ NO ____ Young People understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. YES ____ NO ____ Young People will be able to describe the *Circle of Grace* which God gives each of us.
3. YES ____ NO ____ Young People will be able to identify and maintain appropriate boundaries.
4. YES ____ NO ____ Young People can identify types of boundary violations.
5. YES ____ NO ____ Young People 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 with others (use back if necessary).

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

Return to your School Administrator, Director of Religious Education, or Director of Youth Ministry