

Circle of Grace

Safe Environment Training

How to Be Morally Responsible in Today's Culture

Grade 8 - Lesson Plan

Philosophy

What is a Circle of Grace?

The Catholic Church teaches that God has created each of us as unique and special. Genesis 1:27 tells us that we are created "male and female in God's image" and that God saw this as "very good." In that goodness, we are meant to respect ourselves and everyone else as persons created and loved by God.

Adults assist young people to recognize God's love by helping them to understand that each of us lives and moves in a *Circle of Grace*. You can imagine your own *Circle of Grace* by putting your arms above your head then circle down in front of your body including side to side. This circle, front to back, holds who you are in your body and through your senses. It holds your very essence in mind, heart, soul, and sexuality.

Why is it important to help our young people understand the Circle of Grace?

God intends our relationships in life to be experiences of divine love. Respectful, nurturing, loving relationships increase our understanding of our own value and help us to love others. It is never too early to help young people understand how very special they are and how relationships in life are called to be sacred. Understanding this can help them to protect the special person they are and to be respectful of others.

Adults, as they strive to provide a safe and protective environment, hold the responsibility to help young people understand and respect their own dignity and that of others. A truly safe and protective environment is one where young people recognize when they are safe or unsafe and know how to bring their concerns, fears, and uncertainties to the trusted adults in their lives.

How is the Circle of Grace Curriculum different from other safety programs?

According to research, one in four girls and one in seven boys will be sexually abused by age eighteen.¹ Many protection programs focus on "stranger danger," however, up to ninety percent of the time the perpetrator is a relative, family friend or other person known to the child/young person. *Circle of Grace* goes beyond just protection by helping young people understand the sacredness of who they are and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults.

Goal of the Circle of Grace Curriculum - Grades K-12

The goal of the *Circle of Grace* curriculum is to educate and empower children and young people to actively participate in a safe environment for themselves and others.

Objectives of the Circle of Grace Curriculum - Grades K-12

- Children/Young People will understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Children/Young People will be able to describe the *Circle of Grace* which God gives each of us.
- Children/Young People will be able to identify, discern and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries.
- Children/Young People will be able to identify all types of boundary violations.
- Children/Young People will demonstrate how to take action if any boundary is threatened or violated.

¹ www.usccb.org, or <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>

Grade 8 Leader Guidelines

- A **Leader** is defined as clergy (priest or deacon) school administrator, director of religious education/formation, teacher, or catechist who has been trained to teach the *Circle of Grace* Program.
- Every leader should read the Philosophy, Goals and Key Concepts to better understand and prepare to teach the *Circle of Grace*. The Key Concepts review the essence of the curriculum, that God is always present in our *Circle of Grace* because He desires an intimate relationship with His children.
- The time frame for lessons may vary depending on size of class, age of young people, amount of discussion, etc.
- Vocabularies with definitions are intended for the instructor. The explanation of vocabulary should be integrated within the context of the lessons to assist the young people in their understanding of the *Circle of Grace* Curriculum. The depth of the young people's understanding will depend upon their age and developmental stage. A master vocabulary list of the *Circle of Grace* Curriculum is included in all lesson plans. The pertinent vocabulary is listed in each lesson.
- Leader's instructions for each lesson are italicized. Non-italicized text needs to be presented by the leader to the students.
- Ongoing reinforcement of the concepts is encouraged throughout the year. Hopefully, the language of *Circle of Grace* will become a part of a positive culture of respect, care, and faith that will help protect our young people and help them to know what to do when they feel unsafe.
- If possible, it is always "best practice" to have two adults in the room during the lesson due to the sensitive nature of the material.
- There are five alternative lessons plus a retreat available for grades 5-8 on the Circle of Grace Partner's website.
- Your School Administrator, Religious Education Director, or Youth Minister Director will be sending out a letter to all parents regarding *Circle of Grace*. Lesson specific parent information should be handed out as directed. The Parent Packet is included in the curriculum. Every parish/school is encouraged to provide parent education opportunities both to inform parents about the *Circle of Grace* curriculum and to foster greater communication in families.
- Evaluations for each grade are to be completed and returned to the School Administrator or the Director of Religious Education/Formation. The evaluations will be used to complete the Summary Evaluation that is used for ongoing improvement of the curriculum and for the audit records.

Summary of the Key Concepts of “Circle of Grace”



God gives each of us a Circle of Grace (see below) 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.*

*Knowing 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 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 several trusted adults, in addition to our parents, to talk to about our worries, concerns or “funny/ uncomfortable feelings” so they can help us be safe. If a parent or trusted adult is not available or unable to help us, God wants us to go to another trusted adult until we get the help needed to be safe.

Morally Responsible 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 (*Students are not expected to memorize 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.
10. **Chastity:** having purity of heart, mind, body, and soul. Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person.

Materials Needed

1. A Bible for reference if needed
2. Copy of the Key Summary of Circle of Grace for each student (front of lesson)
3. A Catechism of the Catholic Church for reference if needed
4. Vocabulary Worksheet for each young person (end of lesson).
5. A Ten Commandments Worksheet for each young person (end of lesson).
6. "Don't Be Duped" Safety Plan (end of lesson)
7. Parent Letter and the "Take Home - Ten Commandments" Worksheet (end of lesson)
8. A blank sheet of paper for each young person.
9. White board or chalk board.

Opening Prayer

Call the youth to quiet down and recognize the Lord's presence in their midst.

The prayer, which was written by an eighth grader, can be read to the young people or they can be given a copy of the prayer to say together.

**My God,
love my inmost heart.
Love the person inside me that fears the world,
not the facade I portray to the world.
This image is not my inmost heart,
it only masks the person You made me to be.
This person is trapped in me, afraid to break free,
in fear of the world and what people say.
Lord, help the person You made me to be
break through the act I show the world.
What I believe is so important to me,
though the world may not see that, it is true.
Help me to show the world my beliefs.
I realize now that if I shut out the inmost heart,
my true real self will be trapped forever.
Your divine power is with me always, God.
You know my inmost heart.
I speak to You as the person You made me to be.
Speaking to You frees my inmost heart.
Amen.**

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. We want our young people to understand that God is with them and for them even when they are hurting or sad.

Review

Distribute and review the Summary of the Key Concepts of Circle of Grace. Reinforce the following:

1. We have learned about *Circle of Grace* before. Our *Circle of Grace* is the love and goodness of God that always surrounds us.
2. God is with us and within us in a special way. The Holy Spirit helps us to remember that we belong to God. We are always in a special, holy place.
3. If we can remember that we are in a *Circle of Grace*, with God and surrounded by his love, we will remember to behave with respect for ourselves and others.

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

4. 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.*
5. We are always changing, but God's love is constant and forever present.
6. God always puts trusted adults in our lives to help us when we feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

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 Worksheet. 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 "Christian/Catholic Values" and list them on the board.*
- *Use the Ten Commandments Worksheet as a guideline (end of lesson).*

What are some ways we learn about the values of today's "Popular Culture"?

Make a list on the board, e.g., 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 Worksheet will help you begin to compare and contrast.

1. ***Divide students into small groups.*** *Hand out the Ten Commandments Worksheet to each group.*
2. *When the worksheet is completed, 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 they wrote on their worksheet.*
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 Letter and the Parent and Child Ten Commandments Worksheet. Instruct the students to complete the worksheet with their parents and have their parents sign off on it. Students are to turn in the signed worksheet.*

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. *Review "Don't Be Duped" Safety Plan (end of lesson).*

Conclude 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.

Closing Prayer

Call the youth to quiet down and recognize the Lord's presence in their midst. The prayer can be read to the young people, or they can be given a copy of the prayer to say together (see the end of Grade 8 Lesson).

**With each new day that dawns I am growing up, Lord.
It's not too soon to be thinking of the person I want to become.
It's very hard, I think,
to make the choices You desire
which are always best for me,
even though today's culture would have me think otherwise.
I pray that You will help me and guide me.
Let me share, each day,
my talents where they are needed,
and, when You prompt me with Your Holy Spirit,
let me have the courage to be generous and open
to do what You want.
Amen.**

Opening Prayer

My God,
love my inmost heart.
Love the person inside me that fears the world,
not the facade I portray to the world.
This image is not my inmost heart,
it only masks the person You made me to be.
This person is trapped in me, afraid to break free,
in fear of the world and what people say.
Lord, help the person You made me to be
break through the act I show the world.
What I believe is so important to me,
though the world may not see that, it is true.
Help me to show the world my beliefs.
I realize now that if I shut out the inmost heart,
my true real self will be trapped forever.
Your divine power is with me always, God.
You know my inmost heart.
I speak to You as the person You made me to be.
Speaking to You frees my inmost heart.
Amen.

Closing Prayer

With each new day that dawns I am growing up, Lord.
It's not too soon to be thinking of the person I want to become.
It's very hard, I think,
to make the choices You desire
which are always best for me,
even though today's culture would have me think otherwise.
I pray that You will help me and guide me.
Let me share, each day,
my talents where they are needed,
and, when You prompt me with Your Holy Spirit,
let me have the courage to be generous and open
to do what You want.
Amen.

Vocabulary Worksheet

List a value in popular culture that may be inconsistent 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 Worksheet

List a value in popular culture that may be inconsistent 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 (in person or electronically)</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 in person or electronically</i>	
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. <i>-All are called to respect the relationship between a husband and a wife. We are called to live chaste lives.</i>	
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods. <i>-Do not be envious of what others possess</i>	

Parent and Child Ten Commandments Worksheet

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

Parent signature: _____

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>	

“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?
 11. Are people around you apprehensive/concerned about the relationship?

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. Someone may pressure you to do something that makes you uncomfortable. You may feel confused because you admire them.

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?
- Are you afraid of them?

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 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/controlling you or not respecting your *Circle of Grace* or someone else's *Circle of Grace*.

Circle of Grace
Parent Letter and Activity
How to be Morally Responsible in Today's Culture
Grade 8 Lesson

Dear Parent,

Circle of Grace is a faith-based safety curriculum used by your arch/diocese. Today your child learned about “**How to Be Morally Responsible in Today's Culture**”.

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 worksheet with your child. The worksheet needs to be returned at your child's next session.

Thank you for allowing us to be a partner in providing a safe environment for your child.

Grade 8 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 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.