

Circle of Grace

Safe Environment Training

Grade 5 – 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 children 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 children 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 children 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 children understand and respect their own dignity and that of others. A truly safe and protective environment is one where children 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 Program different from other protection 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 children understand the sacredness of who they are and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults.

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

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

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

Objectives of the Circle of Grace Program - 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* that God gives each of us.
- Children/Young People will be able to identify 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.

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 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 people in our lives to help us when we are troubled or struggling with a concern.
- God wants us to talk to trusted adults about our worries, concerns or uncomfortable feelings so they can help us be safe and take the right action.

This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:

- Jesus' life as a model for our own
- God calls us to be responsible for our actions
- Understand the importance of serving others as Jesus did
- God teaches us to lead a healthy life and make good choices
- Human life is sacred and must be respected
- Our conscience helps us to know what is right and do what we believe is right □ God calls us to be responsible for our own action

Lesson Goal

Children will be able to recognize the influence of the media on their *Circle of Grace*.

Lesson Objectives

Children will be able to:

1. Understand and describe their *Circle of Grace*.
2. Recognize that trusted adults help us stay safe in our *Circle of Grace* and help us respect others in their *Circle of Grace*.
3. Identify the different technology devices that offer internet availability.
4. Identify different types of media and how they influence our *Circle of Grace* in positive and negative ways.
5. Identify boundaries when using the internet.
6. Formulate an action plan for safe use/safe exit of the internet

Circle of Grace Vocabulary

Words introduced in Fifth Grade

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

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

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.

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. 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.

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

Safe Touch: Touch that respects others and me.

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.

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.

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

Stoplight: A traffic light (red, yellow, green) that is a visual signal for keeping vehicles and people safe.

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*.

Unsafe: Anything that causes harm to myself or others.

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

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

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

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

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

Blog: An online journal. Personal stories or thoughts can be posted as in a personal journal. This is a public journal that anyone can access.

Chat Room: The name given to a place or page in a website or online service where people can chat with each other by typing messages which are displayed almost instantly on the screens of others who are in the chat room.

Instant Messaging (IM): Technology similar to that of chat rooms which notifies a user when a person is online allowing them to converse by exchanging text messages.

Location Application: An application used in phones to find a location of a popular spot (restaurant, park etc.). People use the application to check in and it broadcasts the location to all of their friends.

Micro Blogging: This service allows users to give updates about what they are doing in less than 140 characters

Social Networking Service and Websites: These services and websites are used to communicate with (a person) or search for information about (a person).

Video Sharing Service: This service allows users to watch videos posted by others and to upload videos of their own.

Cyber Bullying: Use of the internet, cell phone or other electronic device to send or post texts or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

E-mail: Electronic mail. Sending/ receiving a type written message from one screen to another.

Flaming: Sending a deliberately confrontational message to others on the internet.

Inappropriate Material: Pictures or words on the internet that makes one feel uncomfortable, scared, or that intentionally degrades a human person.

Netiquette: Courteous, honest, and polite behavior practiced on the internet.

Personal Contact Information: Information that allows an individual to be contacted or located in the physical world, i.e., a telephone number or an address.

Phishing: An identity theft scam in which criminals send out spam that imitates the look and language of legitimate correspondence from e-commerce sites. The fake messages generally link to websites that are similarly faked to look like the sites of respected companies. On the sites, users are directed to enter their personal information for authentication or confirmation purposes. The information, when submitted, goes to the thieves not to the “spoofed” company.

Pop Up: A term for unsolicited advertising that appears as its own browser window.

Predator: Someone who uses the internet to obtain personal information about others with the intent to do harm.

Smart Phone: Is a mobile phone that offers advanced features like the internet, a camera, and applications such as games and special interest information.

Texting: Sending a short text (typed) message between cell phones or other handheld devices.

Webcam: A front facing video camera that attaches to a computer or is built into a laptop.

Media: Mass communication formats (music, TV, magazines, movies, videos, internet, computer games, books, advertisements, news, newspapers, radio, etc.) which provide education, information, entertainment, and advertising.

Inappropriate Media: Images or words, spoken or written, that makes one feel uncomfortable, scared, or that intentionally degrade a human person.

Opening Prayer:

**Holy Spirit, show us the way.
Be with us in all we think, do and say. Amen.**

Lesson: Understanding the Influence of the Media on our Circle of Grace

Activity - Circle of Grace

1. Show the Circle of Grace Logo (color sheet). Talk about each part of logo:
 - The dove represents God with us in the Person of the Holy Spirit.
 - The figure represents a Child of God.
 - The small circle represents Grace: the goodness and love of God that is always in us and is surrounding us.
 - The large outer circle represents the world in which we live.

Have your child to stand with enough space to extend their arms without touching anything. Noe have them reach with both hands as high over their heads as they can and then bring their arms down in a big arc until they circle around their feet. As they stand back up again, have them turn in a circle as they bring their arms up, to show that their Circle of Grace is really a sphere that surrounds them on all sides.

Explain that all persons, every Child of God, lives and breathes in their own circle of God's love and goodness, their own Circle of Grace.

Summarize Circle of Grace; have your child describe their Circle of Grace.

- Our *Circle of Grace* is the love and goodness of God that always surround us.
- God is with us and within us in a special way. God is with us because He desires a close relationship with each of us. The Holy Spirit helps us to remember that we belong to God. We are always in a special, holy place.
- 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 the respect for ourselves and others.
- We are all made in the image and likeness of God and therefore we are sacred and holy, deserving of great respect.
- Jesus told us that he would always love us, and His Spirit would always be with us. If we are always in His presence, we are always in a special, holy place. We call that place our *Circle of Grace*.
- If we remember that we are in a *Circle of Grace*, that God is there with us and we are surrounded by His love, we will remember to behave with special respect for ourselves and for others. God is with us because he desires a close relationship with each of us.

Before you start the next activity take a few minutes to review the vocabulary word list to assure both you and your child has a good understanding of terms. Also review what they have remember from past Circle of Grace lessons.

1. Last year, you may have talked about the internet and your *Circle of Grace*. How can the internet be used in both safe and unsafe ways?
2. What are some of the rules for using the internet in a safe manner so your boundaries will not be violated?

Be sure the following are included in the responses:

- a. Never give out personal information.
- b. It is important that you are comfortable with a trusted adult seeing what you are typing on the computer or texting on the cell phone.
- c. It is important that you are comfortable with a trusted adult seeing what you are looking at on the computer or cell phone.
- d. If you are in a site where you feel like you should lie or if you wonder if what it says is true, you are not in a safe place. You must get a trusted adult to help you.

Discussion

Now we are going to talk about how all of the forms of media and mass communication influence us in our *Circle of Grace*. We may never have considered media as violating our *Circle of Grace*. It can when it has negative words, images, or content that never should be in our *Circle of Grace*. It is important to be able to discern that media does not necessarily relay information or images in a truthful or accurate manner. Many times, especially in advertising, it is meant to sway us to feel or act in a certain way.

1. The media give us ways to communicate with many people. The internet, magazines and cell phones are some examples.

Have child(ren) come up with other types of media forms and list them (some examples - music, TV, movies, videos, computer games, books, advertisements, newspapers, radio, etc.). Be sure to include the internet and magazines on the list.

2. Typical functions of media are to educate, communicate, inform, and advertise.

List these four functions on separate sheets of paper.

Go back over the types of media listed and have child(ren) name what function(s) each type of medium performs.

Activity – Positive and Negative Influences of Media

1. *On each sheet list both positive and negative ways each form of medium can be used.*
2. *Now from the list, rank the top three forms of media that influence them in a positive way and the top three that influence them in a negative way.*

Activity – Ten Commandments

God gave us the Ten Commandments to help us know what is right to do even when other influences try to confuse or manipulate us. Today you are going to decide if you think examples from various forms of media support the Ten Commandments or work against our desire to follow the Commandments.

1. *On separate sheets of paper write at the top; “Media That Help Us to Obey the Ten Commandments”, “Media That Do Not Help Us to Obey the Ten Commandments” and “Neutral to the Ten Commandments”*

Write on sheet that best type of medium where they think it belongs in the spectrum of supporting or not supporting our desire to obey the Commandments.

2. *Now ask where they believe a particular form of medium is on the spectrum when it has a particular action in it. Some examples:*

- a) *You are watching TV and someone is punching another person.*
- b) *You read an article in the newspaper where a firefighter saves a family from a house fire.*

Have children do this with all the major forms of media that are listed.

Review

1. Some media mediums cause different reactions, what caused to move? What changed in the medium?
2. Media can give us both positive and negative information. God gave us the freedom to choose our own actions. How do we use the media in a way that helps us make good choices (e.g., choose media sources that support the Ten Commandments, the teachings of our Catholic faith, our parents, and trusted adults)?
3. What is the purpose of the messages that parents and trusted adults give us (e.g., to teach, protect, love)? What is the purpose of the influence our Catholic faith has on our lives (e.g., to teach, protect, love)? What is the purpose of the messages that are conveyed by the media (e.g., to sell things, influence your decisions, manipulate your opinions)?
4. What can we do if we are not sure if a type of medium is a positive or a negative influence? We can always turn to a trusted adult to help us know if a type of medium is a good influence and to help us make decisions that keep us safe in our *Circle of Grace*.
5. *Ask them to quietly reflect on all the ways that the media influence our thinking and behavior every day. Remind them that as Catholics, God has given us the Ten Commandments, the teachings of our Catholic faith, and our parents and trusted adults to help us make decisions and keep us safe in our Circle of Grace.*

Closing Prayer

**Thank you, God,
for always being with me in my *Circle of Grace*.
Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit who
helps me know what is good.
Thank you for giving me people who care about me and
want me to be safe. Amen.**

