

Lesson

Understanding the Influence of the Media on our Circle of Grace

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 Christian teachings:

- Jesus' life as a model for our own
- God calls us to be responsible for our actions
- 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 different types of media and how they influence our *Circle of Grace* in positive and negative ways.

Vocabulary

1. **Circle of Grace**: The love and goodness of God which always surrounds me and all others.
2. **Safe Secret**: A secret is safe when it does not hurt others or me.
3. **Unsafe Secret**: A secret is unsafe when I think that someone, including me, could be hurt or get in trouble if I do not tell.
4. **Trust**: Being able to count on someone to help me to stay safe within my *Circle of Grace*.

5. **Trusted Adult:** An adult that helps us stay safe in our *Circle of Grace* and helps us respect others in their *Circle of Grace*.
6. **Boundary:** The borders or limits we need to keep ourselves safe within our *Circle of Grace*.
7. **Media:** Mass communication formats (music, TV, magazines, movies, videos, internet, computer games, books, advertisements, news, newspapers, radio, etc.) that provide education, information, entertainment, and advertising.
Inappropriate Media: Images, words that are spoken or written, that make one feel uncomfortable or scared, disrespectful to people or would be something your parent/trusted adult would not approve of.

Materials Needed

1. *Circle of Grace* Logo (see the end of Grade 5 Lessons)
2. Paper
3. Pens or markers
4. Blackboard/chalk or Whiteboard/markers
5. Commandment Activity Signs (see the end of Grade 5 Lessons)

Lesson Opening

Leader calls class to prayer by asking children to quiet down and leads them in prayer. Leader may use their own words or the below example.

**Holy Spirit, show us the way.
Be with us in all we think, do and say. 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 children in every group who may have already experienced unsafe or hurtful situations. It is important to reinforce that it is not their fault. We want our children to understand that God is with them and for them even when they are hurting or sad.

Summarize Circle of Grace with the following:

1. *Have children describe their Circle of Grace. It is helpful to have the Circle of Grace Logo available.*
 - a. *We have learned about Circle of Grace in the past (or in previous lessons). Our Circle of Grace is the love and goodness of God that always surround us.*
 - b. *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.*

- c. 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.
- 2. *Identify what a trusted adult is and how they help protect you in your Circle of Grace.*
- 3. 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?
- 4. 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. Never send a picture or anything else to someone who requests it.
- c. Tell a trusted adult if someone sends you a picture or message that makes you uncomfortable or you know your parents would not approve.
- d. It is important that you are comfortable with a trusted adult seeing what you are writing/doing on the computer/tablet/gaming system or cellphone
- e. It is important that you are comfortable with a trusted adult seeing what you are looking at on the computer/tablet/gaming system or cell phone.
- f. 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.

Lesson Development

Now we are going to talk about how all 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, accurate or respectful manner. Many times, especially in advertising, it is meant to sway us to feel or act in a certain way.

- 1. Media gives us ways to communicate with many people. The internet, magazines and cell phones are some examples.

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

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

List these five functions on the board.

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

Activity – Positive and Negative Influences of Media

1. *Have children break into small groups. Pass out pens and paper. Break down the list of media forms on the board and assign some to each small group. Have groups list both positive and negative ways each form of medium can be used. You might want to assign the same types of media to more than one group to get a broad range of answers.*
2. *From the list on the board, have each small group 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.*
3. *Gather children together as a large group. Take each form of medium on the board and have small groups report on positive and negative ways it can be used.*
4. *Have each group report on their choices for the top three media types that have a positive influence and the top three for negative influences. Tally the total to get the top three positive and negative influences for the class.*

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. *Post signs declaring one side of the room as “Media That Help Us to Obey the Ten Commandments”, the other side of the room as “Media That Do Not Help Us to Obey the Ten Commandments” and the transitional space between as “Neutral to the Ten Commandments” (samples of signs are at the end of the lesson).*
2. *Name a type of medium and have children stand where they think it belongs in the spectrum of supporting or not supporting our desire to obey the Commandments.*
3. *Now ask children to stand where they believe a particular form of medium is on the spectrum when it has a particular action in it. Some examples are below, please add more.*
 - 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 written on the board.

Review

1. *What caused you 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 Christian 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 Christian 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 the children to quietly reflect on all the ways that the media influence our thinking and behavior every day. Remind them that as Christians, God has given us the Ten Commandments, the teachings of our Christian faith, and our parents and trusted adults to help us make decisions and keep us safe in our Circle of Grace.*
6. *Distribute the Parent Take Home Activity.*

Lesson Closing

Leader directs children to quiet down and leads them in prayer. Leader may use their own words or the below example.

**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.**

Lesson Opening Example

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

Lesson Closing Example

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.