

VIRTUS: Safe Environment Children's Program

Lesson 3 for Grades 6, 7 and 8:

Safety, Communication and Unconditional Love

- Principle:** To identify risky behavior in adults. Specifically:
- Know the difference between unconditional love and love that has strings attached.
 - Reinforce safety rules and set rules for what gifts from adults are appropriate for a child to accept.

Catechism: *Man is obliged to follow the moral law, which urges him “to do what is good and avoid what is evil”(cf. GS 16). This law makes itself heard in his conscience.*
#1713

“To love is to will the good of another.”(cf. Mk 7:21) All other affections have their source in this first movement of the human heart toward the good. Only the good can be loved. Passions “are evil if love is evil and good if it is good.”
#1766

Goal: To assist educators, catechists, youth ministers, and other caring adults in teaching children how to prevent or reduce the risk of sexual abuse.

Objectives: To give children an understanding of unconditional love and to know and learn that if someone puts conditions on their love, that is not the kind of love God intended for us. Upon completion of this lesson, children should be better able to understand that:

- love requires respecting others and ourselves.
- we are called to love others as God and Jesus loves us.
- if we are being hurt or treated disrespectfully we should tell a trusted adult.
- the keeping secrets rule is that only good surprises should be kept secret.
- there is a distinction between a gift given from love and generosity and one that is given in secrecy, in which the rules for keeping secrets have been broken.

Activity #1: Review and discuss the vocabulary words:

- **Secrets** – something that is hidden from others or that is known only to one or to a few.
- **Surprise** – something that leaves a person feeling wonder, astonishment, or amazement, as at something unanticipated.
- **Confusing** – to cause to be unable to think clearly, to make unclear or incomprehensible.

- **Unconditional Love** – love that is given without any strings attached, being loved for just being one’s self.
- **Rule** – a principle or regulation governing conduct, action or procedure.
- **“Golden Rule”** – Jesus asked us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Activity #2: Discussion - If you really love me...:

When Jesus told us to “love God with all your heart” and to “love your neighbor as yourself,” he meant for us to show love unconditionally. That means that our neighbor does not have to do anything special - they don’t have to be deserving of our love.

How many of you have heard someone say, “If you really love me you will...(take out the trash, do me this one favor, listen to what I say, let me do what I want, etc.)?” Sometimes people say it without even thinking. As we grow older and enter more exclusive friendships and relationships it is important to keep in mind that we are called to love one another unconditionally. When someone creates conditions, challenging us to prove our love or prove that we are deserving of theirs, they are not modeling the kind of unconditional love Jesus desires for us. When we are loved unconditionally we desire to serve, to listen, and to open our hearts to others. True love is based on respect for ourselves and others. Remember that Jesus loves you unconditionally and that you are deserving of such love as a creature of God. If someone is violating your boundaries, treating you disrespectfully, or asking you to give up your values in the name of love; let them know that love does not work that way.

Activity # 3: St Paul explains love:

Directions: Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 then give each student a copy of the “Love is...” crossword puzzle to complete. Explain how St. Paul’s words are used at many wedding ceremonies but are not only intended for romantic love but also for how we love all others in our lives.

Activity #4: Warning Signs:

Discussion: As we go through our daily lives we notice and respond to many signs. How many signs did you use so far today? Ask the students to list those signs. If no one responds, prompt with “Did anyone use the public restroom? How did you know which one to use? Did you leave through an EXIT door? Go into someone’s office?”

We watch for traffic signs when we are riding a bike or crossing a city street. We look for signs to tell us how to get in and out, which bathroom to use, a mall map to find the correct store, etc. Some signs warn us of danger. Use the handout and ask the students to explain the meaning of Stop, Caution, Do Not Enter, and WALK. Explain how there are signs in relationships too. We

should take notice of signs that we are headed down an unsafe path in a relationship. Some of those signs include things like:

- Feeling pressure to break rules, keep secrets, or compromise our values/beliefs
- Adults who give us too much attention, give us gifts without our parents' knowledge
- Adults or even older kids who make us feel uncomfortable or confused
- Being treated disrespectfully
- Being physically hurt or threatened

If you notice warning signs in a relationship they may be telling you to do something to stop the behavior, proceed with caution, or just walk away. If you aren't sure what to do, talk to a trusted adult.

Ask the students to fill out the "Warning Signs" worksheet and then have them share their answers.

Suggested prayer to end the lesson:

Note to Teacher: This prayer is a variation of an old Catholic traveler's prayer to be said before beginning a journey. Remind your students that, as they grow up, they are on a journey through life. Each time they leave their home and go out on their own or with peers, they are traveling. Prayer helps prepare them for the journey and guides them along the way.

My holy Angel Guardian,
Ask the Lord to bless the journey that I undertake,
That it may benefit the health of my soul and body;
That I may reach its end,
And that, returning safe and sound,
I may find my family in good health.
Guard, guide and preserve us throughout the day and night.

Amen.