

# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

#### *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.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org), or <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>

## *Grade 5 Leader Guidelines*

- **Leader** is defined as clergy, 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* and desires an intimate relationship with His children.
- The time frame for lessons may vary depending on size of class, age of children, amount of discussion, etc.
- Vocabularies with definitions are intended for the leader. The explanation of vocabulary should be integrated within the context of the lessons to assist the children in their understanding of the *Circle of Grace* Program. The depth of the children's understanding will depend upon their age and developmental stage. A master vocabulary list of the *Circle of Grace* Program is included in all lesson plans. The pertinent vocabulary is listed in each lesson.
- 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.
- 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 children and help them to know what to do when they feel unsafe.
- Your Administrator or Religious Education 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 Program. Every parish/school is encouraged to provide parent education opportunities both to inform parents about the *Circle of Grace* program 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 program 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 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.

# *Circle of Grace Vocabulary*

## **Words introduced in Kindergarten**

**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.

## **Words Introduced in First Grade**

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

## **Words Introduced in Second Grade**

No new words.

## **Words Introduced in Third Grade**

**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.

## Words Introduced in Fourth Grade

### **Social Media/Networking**

**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.

### **Other Terms**

**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.

## **Words Introduced in Fifth Grade**

**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.

## **Words Introduced in Sixth Grade**

**Admiration**: A feeling of high regard or sense of awe.

**Dream**: A hope or aspiration which we imagine will become real.

**Empathy**: The ability to understand the feelings of another person.

**Healthy**: That which is sound and vigorous in mind, body, and spirit.

**Relationship**: A connection with God or others.

**Response**: Something said or done as a reaction or answer.

**Talent**: A special God-given ability or gift.

**Value**: A principle standard or quality considered desirable.

**Violation**: A break or infringement of another person's rights.

## **Words Introduced in Seventh Grade**

**Bullying**: Any deliberate aggressive act, by a person or group, with the intent to inflict harm (physical or emotional) on another person.

**Bystander**: Someone who witnesses the bullying. They can have a negative or positive influence on the bullying behavior.

**Cyber Bullying**: The use of the internet, cell phones or other electronic devices to send or post texts or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

**Disrespect**: Treating with rudeness, insult, or lack of respect.

## **Words Introduced in Eighth Grade**

**Conscience**: The gift from God that helps us to know the difference between right and wrong.

**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.

**Morality**: The way we put our beliefs into action for good.

**Sexuality**: Everything that makes us female or male. This includes feelings, attitudes, values, relationships, and ideas.

## Words Introduced in Ninth Grade

**Exploit**: To take unfair advantage of someone/some situation in order to get some benefit.

**Forced Isolation**: When someone forces/pressures another to be separated from others in order to gain control.

**Secrecy**: The condition of being hidden or concealed. The habit or practice of keeping secrets or maintaining privacy or concealment.

**Sexting**: Sexually explicit images or text messages sent by way of a phone. There may be legal consequences if one or both persons involved are minors.

**Unequal Power**: When one person has more power in a relationship. This can be in the area of age, size, position, resources, status or knowledge.

## Words Introduced in Tenth Grade

**Boundary**: A border or limit that helps keep us safe and separate from another person or entity. Boundaries help define relationships. They are either concrete (physical/visual/audio) or abstract (emotions/beliefs/internal guidelines/rules).

**Circle of Virtue**: Our response to the invitation of God's grace by cultivating goodness and virtue in our lives.

## Words Introduced in Eleventh Grade

**Freely Chosen Violations**: Every person is responsible for those violations they freely choose and know are wrong. We should never blame or accuse persons who are victims of abuse and manipulated or exploited in unequal relationships.

**Moral Responsibility**: As we grow into mature adults, we must take greater responsibility for protecting ourselves and others from violations of God's plan for our spiritual, sexual, and moral lives.

**Offender**: Someone who exhibits behaviors for the sole purpose of putting another person in a vulnerable position to be exploited/abused.

**Survivor**: A person who not only lives through but thrives despite abuse, affliction, or adversity.

**Victim**: A person who has suffered injury/harm (physical or emotional) by forces beyond his or her control and not of his or her personal responsibility.

## Words Introduced in Twelfth Grade

No new words.

# 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 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 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 or words, spoken or written, that make one feel uncomfortable or scared.

## 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)

## Opening Prayer:

Leader calls the class to prayer by asking the children to quiet themselves and join in the Sign of the Cross. Then say together,

**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. 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. 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.

## **Lesson Development**

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 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, etc.). Be sure to include the internet and magazines on the list on the board.*

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

*List these four 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:*
  - 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 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 the children 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.*
6. *Distribute the Parent Take Home Activity.*

## **Closing Prayer**

*Leader calls the class to prayer by asking the children to quiet themselves and join in the Sign of the Cross.*

**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.**

*(Optional) Have the children stand and sing with you the song “This is Holy Ground” or “Prayer for Peace” or other appropriate song or prayer.*

## Opening Prayer

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

## 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.



**MEDIA THAT HELP US  
TO OBEY  
THE TEN  
COMMANDMENTS**

**MEDIA THAT ARE  
NEUTRAL TO  
THE TEN  
COMMANDMENTS**



**MEDIA THAT DO NOT  
HELP US TO OBEY**

**THE TEN  
COMMANDMENTS**

**Parent Take Home Activity**  
**Grade 5: Understanding the Influence**  
**of the Media on our *Circle of Grace***

Dear Parent,

We presented the *Circle of Grace* Lesson “**Understanding the Influence of the Media on our *Circle of Grace***” to your child. The goal of the lesson was to help the children recognize that all forms of media influence our *Circle of Grace*. The media can have a positive or negative influence in our desire to obey the Ten Commandments and live our faith to its fullest.

Please choose a form of medium (TV show, Movie, Newspaper article, Video Game, etc.) to review with your child. Discuss the influence on their *Circle of Grace* of what you see, hear, or read.

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.

## Grade 5 Evaluation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parish/School \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Leader \_\_\_\_\_ Number of children in class \_\_\_\_\_

Each grade's curriculum was designed to meet the overall program objectives.  
Please check if each of the objectives of the *Circle of Grace* Program were met.

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

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

**Return to your School Administrator or Director of Religious Education.**