

Middle School Lesson Ages 11-13

Creating A CASE for Safe Environments

Objectives:

- The youth will appreciate the Church teaching on human dignity and recognize their own dignity
- The youth will understand recognize physical, emotional and behavioral boundaries in their lives and those of others
- The youth will understand the plight of sexual abuse and practical methods of protection
- The youth will understand the vast majority of adults care about them and want what is best for them.

Opening Prayer:

A Reading from the First Letter of St. John

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light in in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

The Word of the Lord.

Lord Jesus, help us learn today that we are made to walk in the light with you. Help us discover the beauty of being made in your image and how to respect the wonderful gift of one another you have given us. We ask this, as we ask all our prayers, through Christ our Lord, AMEN.

Presentation and Process: Made in the Image and Likeness of God

Invite everyone to choose a partner and ask them to stand back-to-back. Play a game of Telephone Drawing by giving one partner a simple drawing and the other partner a paper and pencil. The partner with the drawing will have 5 minutes to describe the drawing to their partner without saying explicitly what should be drawn. Can the drawer re-create the drawing exactly? After the game, pose this question: How is "likeness" different than a mirror image? The likeness of something resembles and entity without having to be an exact copy. A caricature is a likeness of someone. A photograph is an image. What does being made in the image and likeness of God mean for you and I?

- We show God to others, much like the drawing you created shows a likeness of the original to the viewer.
- We are not God, but we resemble elements of God, just like no copy is exactly the original.

- We recognize that everyone we meet is also made in the image and likeness of God.

When we recognize others to be made in the image and likeness of God, we are compelled to treat one another with respect and love. God loves each of us. He created us with love and for love. We all have great dignity and value. God values us despite our own sinfulness and calls us to value others in the same way. This is called respect. Respect is a virtue that leads us to doing right and avoiding doing what is wrong.

Lead a discussion using the following questions either in whole group or small group setting:

1. How do you show respect for yourself? How do you show respect toward others?
2. When have you strived to treat another as a child of God?
3. When have you been treated as “made in God’s image?”
4. What might look different in the world if more people treated others with respect?
5. How can you tell someone is being disrespectful?

We have Boundaries

Invite everyone to stand up with their partner once again to play the following game:

MIRROR PUSH

Each person faces their partner and holds their hands up to the other palm to palm BUT without touching. The goal is to “push” the other person without touching him or her and without being touched. You must mirror their actions and they must mirror yours.

As Christians we are called to imitate Christ. We try to be the mirror that show Christ and Christian love to the world. Trying to push someone over in the game reminds us that as humans, we sometimes try to exert control over another. We are not God; those actions force others to feel disrespected. When we act, feel, or believe that we have control over another, we cross important boundaries.

We show respect for ourselves and others by recognizing boundaries. Some boundaries are put in place by us, personally and some are enacted by authority figures like parents, teachers, or lawmakers.

Boundaries are physical, emotional, and behavioral limits. Because we are imperfect human beings, we require boundaries in our relationships. Boundaries provide us with the promise of being in a relationship where both people are committed to preserving the respect and dignity of the other.

Let’s play this game about boundaries:

RAISE A RED FLAG:

Hand out a red paper flag to everyone in the group (a piece of red construction paper works!) Pose the following questions and ask them to raise a red flag if they believe the situation crosses or is ABOUT to cross a boundary:

Physical Boundaries:

1. Your best friend gives you a fist bump
2. Your mom gives you a kiss on the cheek
3. Your band teacher rubs your back
4. Your youth minister gives you a hug
5. The elderly woman in the pew behind you shakes your hand during the Sign of Peace
6. A friend puts his or her arm around you at a football game without asking
7. A coach pats you on the bottom when you come off the field
8. A participant at youth group sits "overlapping" you on the couch
9. Your sibling punches you in the arm on the school bus
10. A person comes up behind you in the hall and places their hands over your eyes without saying a word

Emotional Boundaries

1. Your boyfriend/girlfriend gets jealous if you talk to someone else
2. Your boyfriend/girlfriend tells you that he or she loves you
3. Your mom says, "I am not mad, I am just disappointed."
4. A priest scolds you in the confessional
5. A family member threatens you when you don't do what he or she says
6. Your dad is proud when you succeed
7. Your math teacher laughs when you make a mistake
8. A person in your class sends you an inappropriate text
9. Your friends cheer you on at your game or recital
10. Your friend blames you for things that go wrong in his or her life

Behavioral Boundaries

1. Your friend starts changing his or her clothes in front of you
2. Someone offers you weed
3. Your best friend's parent offers to get you into an R rated movie
4. Your neighbor sees you walking and pulls over to see if you need a ride home
5. Your friend's dad leaves a pornographic site up on the family laptop
6. Your youth minister says EVERYONE must play the game
7. Your mom signs you up for a volunteer project
8. Your gym teacher tells you everyone must shower after Phys Ed or will not get a participation grade for the day
9. Your camp counselor wrestles with you
10. Your principal tells you to put your hat in your locker

Review this game by taking some of the questions to the extreme. For example, maybe it is ok for a boyfriend or girlfriend to tell you they love you but NOT on day 2 of a relationship and maybe it's ok for your mom to kiss your cheek but not in the hallway at school. We set

different boundaries for ourselves and have different levels of comfort. Learning to respect what may be comfortable for you and is not comfortable for others is a key skill in life!

When Crossing Boundaries Crosses the Line

Sometimes an individual tries to manipulate another into believing that he or she should cross his or her own predetermined boundaries. This technique is often used to get people to cross their sexual boundaries. For us to be safe, we must be able to identify warning signs of red flags becoming dangerous situations. These can be especially dangerous if an adult tries to get us to cross our own predetermined boundaries. While most adults care for you and want what is best for you, it important for you to be aware of some warning signs:

A person (especially an adult) is crossing the line when:

- They give you alcohol or drugs
- They try to be alone with you or ask you to keep a secret and threaten you if you reveal it
- They try to win you over with gifts, special praise or consideration
- They use conditions you might want to get you something they want
- They ask you too many personal questions or share too many personal details with you
- They touch you too closely or for too long
- They make a comment about your body or that of someone else that is inappropriate
- They invite you to look at pornography
- They try to isolate you from your support system
- They use persistent or inappropriate means of being in communication with you
- They ask you to text a picture of yourself
- They use their authority to manipulate you

HOW TO RESPOND:

1. Inform someone you know and trust about what is happening to you
2. Keep telling until something happens to change your situation

IF a person comes you with information about abuse:

1. Try to be understanding and listen
2. Encourage that person to tell a trusted adult
3. Don't make promises you can't keep
4. Offer to go and tell someone with that person

Closing Prayer:

Let us pray for one another, that we might know of the support we offer each other as the Body of Christ in the world today. May we always be a source of help and comfort. Amen.