

Morality & Justice

Overview:

Christian morality is built on God's steadfast call to live in right relationship with God and with others. God has given us the Ten Commandments as a guide for living in right relationships.

This course will help the participants to learn about the moral principles embodied in the Ten Commandments. In each session, the young people will explore one or more of the Ten Commandments. The participants will have opportunities to apply these Christian moral principles to various real-life situations and will be encouraged to use those principles in their own daily lives.

-

Things to remember when talking with teens about morality and justice:

1. Honor your child's opinions, learning, and experiences.
2. Listen actively to them; make eye contact to show your interest.
3. Understand that these are difficult topics, challenging us as Catholic to counter-culture, often going against what society and their classmates/friends believe and think.
4. Do not make generalizations about children their age; they will likely tune you out. Instead, engage them individually.

Topics/Objectives Covered:

Week One: Moral Decision Making. This session helps the participants to consider their own decision-making processes and to learn to use the Cardinal Virtues as tools for making good decisions.

Week Two: Honoring God. This session explores God's power and role as Creator. The participants will learn that the First Commandment calls us to honor God for all God's great deeds

Week Three: Respecting Life. This session explores the presence of God's image in all of us and the Fifth Commandment's call to respect all life.

Week Four: Working for Justice. This session explores the young people's desire for fairness and how that desire can lead them to answer God's call to do acts of charity and works of justice.

Morality & Justice: Moral Decision Making

Week 1:

Objectives for that week: This lesson enables the participants to do the following:

- Examine their own thought processes when confronted by difficult situations
- Recognize that we need the right tools and skills to successfully complete any undertaking, including the task of making good decisions.
- Discover the Cardinal Virtues as useful tools, or habits, to develop and use for making good decisions.

Questions to ask:

- What is the most difficult decision you have ever had to make? How did you go about deciding?
- When making a tough decision, who influences you more – friends or family? Why?
- How would things be different if everybody made good decisions?

Media Connection:

- What the first twelve minutes of Big Fat Liar (2002, 88 min., rated A-II/PG). This clip shows Jason Shepard (played by Frankie Munz) repeatedly lying to his parents and teacher. The clip ends with Jason failing to return a homework paper and being told by his teacher that he will have to attend summer school.
 - Discussion questions:
 - How many lies did Jason tell before breakfast
 - Does Jason even seem to even notice he is lying or has it become habit?
 - How does Jason's habit of lying affect his relationship with his parents and teachers?
 - How does Jason's lying affect his friend Kaylee?
 - What happens when Jason finally tells the truth?
 - How could Jason use the Cardinal Virtues to address his habit of lying?

Morality & Justice: Honoring God

Week 2:

Objectives for that week: This lesson enables the participants to do the following:

- Appreciate God' wonderful deeds and abilities
- Recognize that in the story of the gold bull-calf, the Israelites failed to give God credit for the wondrous works God had accomplished
- Discover that the First Commandment calls us to honor God by giving God the proper credit for all God has done
- Learn about the way we may fail to honor God and, as a result, break the First Commandment

Questions to ask:

- What would the world be like if everyone honored God?
- Do you have any superstitious behaviors or beliefs? Do you think they make sense if we truly acknowledge that all life comes from God and that all things are in God's hands?
- Why do people like to be thanked for things they do? How can we use this to understand the First Commandment?
- What is idolatry?
- How does it not give God the proper credit?

Media Connection:

- Listen to the song "You're Worthy of My Praise" by Big Daddy Weave (What I Was Made For album, 2005) Search Youtube or Tangle for the video.
 - Discussion questions:
 - How do the lyrics speak of fulfilling the First Commandment?
 - The song speaks of bowing down. When are times outside the church that people bow down? How is bowing down a way we can worship God? Where and when can we bow down to God?
 - What are some ways we can give God praise?

Morality & Justice: Respecting Life

Week 3

Objectives for that week: This lesson enables the participants to do the following:

- Recognize that they are created in God's image
- Explore how Cain lost sight of God's presence in himself and in Abel
- Reflect on the different ways people can show respect for life

Questions to ask:

- Why do you think violent entertainment is so popular?
- What are some reasons people have abortions? How do you think God would address their reasons?
- Why is it sometimes hard for humankind to respect life?

Media Connection:

- Star Wars I: Phantom Menace (1999, rated A-II & PG) - the scene where Anakin is standing before the Jedi Council to see if he is to be accepted as a Jedi-in-training (start time 1:26:00, end time 1:28:00)
 - Talk about emotions and the need to keep them in check in order to be able to respect life

Morality & Justice: Working for Justice

Week 4:

Objectives for that week: This lesson enables the participants to do the following:

- Appreciate how much all people have in common
- Discover that their natural desire for fairness encourages them to work for the common good
- Learn that promoting the common good includes both acts of charity and works of justice
- Consider several social problems in light of the Church's call for all to work for the common good

Questions to ask:

- What are ways young people can work to fight world hunger?
- What do you think when you see a homeless person sleeping on a grate or in a box?
- Would it be worse to be homeless or not have enough food?

Media Connection:

- Listen to the song "The Face of Christ" by Chris Rice (Smell the Color 9, 2000) Check youtube or tangle for the video
 - Discussion questions:
 - What social problems are mentioned in the song?
 - Why might the man be homeless?
 - Why might the 16 year-old have been in prison?
 - According to the song, how are we supposed to respond to people who are less fortunate than us?
 - Whom does the person singing see in the face of the suffering people?
 - How would you respond if you saw a homeless person sleeping on the sidewalk versus seeing Jesus homeless and sleeping on the sidewalk?