



## **CIRCLE OF GRACE**

*Raising your hands above your head and then bring  
your arms slowly down  
keeping them outstretched.*

*Extending your arms  
in front of you  
and then behind you  
embracing all of the space around you  
knowing that **God** is in this space with you.*

*Then slowly  
reach down to your feet.*

*This is your  
**Circle of Grace.***

*You are in it.*

*What would our world look like if we all lived believing and truly knowing that God is that close?*

# *Philosophy*

## *What is a Circle of Grace?*

The Christian Faith 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/young people 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/young people 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/young people 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/young people understand and respect their own dignity and that of others. A truly safe and protective environment is one where children/young people 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 of abuse is known to the child/young person such as a relative or family friend. Circle of Grace goes beyond just protection by helping children/young people 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 the Father and live in His love along with the love of His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
- Children/Young People will be able to describe the Circle of Grace which 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 can identify all types of boundary violations.
- Children/Young People will demonstrate how to take action if any boundary is threatened or violated.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.childwelfare.gov/can/index.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/can/index.cfm)

CIRCLE OF GRACE  
*Safe Environment Faith Based Program*  
*Kindergarten through Grade 12*

Dear Parent,

The \_\_\_\_\_, out of concern for all God's people has a program for the safe environment education of children and young people.

This program is called *Circle of Grace*. It is meant to supplement and be integrated into our current faith based curricula for the formation of children and young people. *Circle of Grace* aims to equip our children and young people by arming them with essential knowledge and skills grounded in the richness of our Christian faith. This program helps children and young people to understand their own (and other's) dignity in mind, body, and spirit.

***What is a Circle of Grace?***

The Christian faith 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 and young people 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 and young people 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, especially parents, as they strive to provide a safe and protective environment, hold the responsibility to help children and young people understand and respect their own dignity and that of others. A truly safe and protective environment is one where children and young people 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>2</sup> Many protection programs focus on "stranger danger"; however, up to ninety percent (90%) of the time the perpetrator of abuse is known to the child or young person such as a relative or family friend. *Circle of Grace* goes beyond just protection by helping children and young people understand the sacredness of who they are and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults.

Please feel free to contact your church or school office if you have questions or want more information.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://nccanch.acfhhs.gov>

# *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 make you 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 me 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<sup>2</sup>**

**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**

**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. We should never blame or accuse persons who are victims of abuse and manipulated or exploited in unequal relationships.

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

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

**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.

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

## **Words Introduced in Twelfth Grade**

No new words.

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# *Kindergarten Leader Guidelines*

- A **Leader** is defined as clergy, pastor, minister, administrator, director, teacher, or catechist/Sunday school teacher who has been trained to teach the Circle of Grace Program.
- Every leader should read the Philosophy and Goals to better understand and prepare to teach the Circle of Grace.
- The time frame 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.
- The Red Light, Green Light, Activity may be adapted to a Happy, Neutral, and Sad Face Activity if the leader believes the children have not been exposed to a stoplight.
- 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.
- There should be no more than two to three weeks between the last two lessons. 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/ Director will be sending 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. You are 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 returned to the Administrator/Director.
- The Circle of Grace meditation is included in each grade. It will help demonstrate the Circle of Grace concept and how God is present in this space because he desires a relationship with all His children.
- Leaders/teachers can add relevant Scripture to the lessons/activities as desired. This is an excellent way to link Circle of Grace with the youth's ongoing Scripture/Bible study.



# *Lesson 1*

## *What is a 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 compliments the following Christian teachings:**

- We are all Children of God.
- As Children of God, we are unique and loved by Him
- Jesus teaches us how to love and respect God and others and self
- God calls all His children to do good.

### **Lesson Goal**

Children will come to understand and/or describe the concept of a Circle of Grace.

### **Lesson Objectives**

**Children will be able to:**

1. Demonstrate his/her own Circle of Grace.
2. Describe what makes a person's Circle of Grace a holy space.
3. Identify the behaviors appropriate for the Circle of Grace.

### **Vocabulary**

1. **Children of God**: All people are made and loved by God.
2. **Circle of Grace**: The love and goodness of God that always surrounds me and all others.
3. **Grace**: The gift of God's goodness and love to help me live as his child.
4. **Holy**: Special because of a connection with God.
5. **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.
6. **Respect**: Being kind to others and doing what's best for myself and others because I honor all people as Children of God.
7. **Trust**: Being able to count on someone to help me to stay safe within my Circle of Grace.

## Materials Needed

1. Circle of Grace logo (see the end of Kindergarten lessons)
2. Whiteboard or chalkboard
3. Chart paper or flip chart paper to make a “happy/sad face chart”
4. Circle of Grace logo coloring page/black and white version (see the end of Kindergarten lessons)
5. (Optional) Happy Face coloring page (see the end of Kindergarten lessons)
6. Markers or crayons (optional)

## Lesson Opening

*Leader directs the 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.**

## Lesson Development

### Getting Started

1. Today we are going to learn about God’s love for us. (*Show children the Circle of Grace Symbol.*)
2. This is a symbol for our Circle of Grace. It reminds us that God loves us and His love is always around us. Everyone has a Circle of Grace.

### Activity - Circle of Grace

1. Where is our Circle of Grace and where are other people’s Circles of Grace?
2. *Ask children to stand with enough room around them to fully extend their arms without touching each other.*
3. *Give the following directions while modeling the desired actions:*
  - a. Reach with both arms as high as you can over your head.
  - b. Circle your arms down on each side and bend down until you reach all the way under your feet.
  - c. As you stand back up again, turn all the way around once as you raise your arms back over your head.
4. This is the Circle of Grace that you live in.
5. *Repeat steps a, b, and c to reinforce physical dimensions of Circle of Grace.*

## **Discussion**

1. Now, we will talk about why it is important that we know about our Circle of Grace.
2. Jesus told us that he would always love us and always be with us. We are always in a special, holy place because God loves us. That place is our Circle of Grace. This is the place the Holy Spirit is with us and within us.
3. If we can remember that we are in a Circle of Grace, with God and surrounded by God's love, we will remember to behave with the respect for ourselves and for others that is called for when we are in a holy place.

## **Optional Activity - Color page**

*Color the Circle of Grace coloring page - black and white version. Leader may choose to use color pages from each Optional Activity to form a Circle of Grace Color Book for the children.*

## **Activity - Happy and Sad Face Chart**

1. *Make a chart with two columns on the poster paper/flip chart paper. Label one with a happy face and one with a sad face.*
2. *What are some nice things that people do or say? What are some hurtful things that people do or say?*
3. *Allow a few responses. List on the board in the appropriate column.*
4. *Point out that words and behaviors listed in the happy face column are those that respect our Circle of Grace. The words and behaviors in the sad face column are those that do not belong in anyone's Circle of Grace.*
5. *Keep happy and sad face chart posted for future reference.*

## **Optional Activity - Color page**

*Color the Happy Face coloring page. Leader may choose to use color pages from each Optional Activity to form a Circle of Grace Color Book for the children.*

## **Review**

1. *Review the Circle of Grace Movement. Ask children to stand with enough room around them to fully extend their arms without touching each other.*
2. *Give the following directions while modeling the desired actions:*
  - a. *Reach with both arms as high as you can over your head.*
  - b. *Circle your arms down on each side and bend down until you reach all the way under your feet.*
  - c. *As you stand back up again, turn all the way around once as you raise your arms back over your head.*
3. *This is the Circle of Grace that you live in.*

## **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.**

## *Grade 6 Leader Guidelines*

- A **Leader** is defined as clergy, pastor, minister, administrator, director, teacher, or catechist/Sunday school teacher 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 young people, 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 young people in their understanding of the *Circle of Grace* Program. The depth of the young people'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.
- There should be no more than two to three weeks between the last two lessons. 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 young people and help them to know what to do when they feel unsafe.
- There is a pre and post assessment for this grade. This tool will assist in evaluating the young people's understanding and assimilation of the concepts. The results are to be recorded on the grade evaluation and are not to be shared with the young people.
- Your Administrator/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. You are 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 returned to the Administrator/Director.
- The *Circle of Grace* meditation is included in each grade. It will help demonstrate the *Circle of Grace* concept and how God is present in this space because he desires a relationship with all His children.
- Leaders/teachers can add relevant Scripture to the lessons/activities as desired. This is an excellent way to link *Circle of Grace* with the youth's ongoing Scripture/Bible study.

# *Lesson 1*

## *Circle of Grace*

### *Pieces of the Puzzle*

Sometimes young people 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 young person, “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 young person at your first opportunity and alert the administration. Remember that you are the responsible reporter in cases of suspected abuse.

#### **This lesson compliments the following Christian teachings:**

- Our Christian faith teaches us to believe in the works and presence of the Father, His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit
- Christian faith requires a relationship with God and others
- We are called to model our faith in our words and actions
- We are called to make moral decisions consistent with Christian teaching
- We are all called to do God’s will
- We are all children of God because of God’s creation and covenants
- Individual and cultural differences are gifts from God that should be respected
- Responsible relationships are based on love, honesty, and respect
- Skills such as listening, self-disclosure, and compromise are necessary for faith filled communications with others.

#### **Lesson Goal**

Young People will come to a deeper understanding of their Circle of Grace.

#### **Lesson Objectives**

**Young people will be able to:**

1. Understand that God’s presence is within us and around us creating our unique Circle of Grace.
2. Identify gifts and talents that make each person unique.
3. Appreciate that God gave these gifts and talents to everyone.
4. Understand that every person has a special place in God’s creation.

**Vocabulary** *(Can be taught by using the matching game: each child has a word or a definition. They find their matching partner and discuss)*

1. **Admiration**: A feeling of high regard or sense of awe.
2. **Children of God**: All people are made and loved by God.
3. **Circle of Grace**: The love and goodness of God that always surrounds me and all others.

4. **Dream**: A hope or aspiration that we imagine will become real.
5. **Grace**: The gift of God's goodness and love to help me live as his child.
6. **Holy**: Special because of a connection with God.
7. **Holy Spirit**: God present with and within me in a special way. The Holy Spirit helps me to remember that I belong to God. The Holy Spirit helps me to experience and live God's love.
8. **Respect**: Being kind to others and doing what's best for myself and others because I honor all people as Children of God.
9. **Symbol**: A picture or object that stands for something else.
10. **Talent**: A special God-given ability or gift.
11. **Trust**: Being able to count on someone to help me to stay safe within my Circle of Grace.
12. **Value**: A principle, standard, or quality considered desirable.

## Materials Needed

1. Pre-assessment for each young person (see the end of Grade 6 lessons)
2. Pens, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, or markers
3. Scissors
4. Tape or glue
5. Circle of Grace Logo (see the end of Grade 6 lessons)
6. Blank puzzle pieces (see the end of Grade 6 lessons)
7. Magazines (provided or approved by leader)
8. Activity Handout for each young person (see the end of Grade 6 lessons)
9. Lesson Closing example (see the end of Grade 6 lessons)
10. Optional Lesson Opening example (see the end of Grade 6 lessons)

## Lesson Opening

*How you arrange the young people depends on the size of your group. Invite them to sit or stand with sufficient space between them. Ask them to quiet themselves and recognize God's presence in them. Please close your eyes as I read to you from the Gospel of John, words that Jesus spoke to his disciples. (John 14:15-18 from the New International Version Bible)*

**15 "If you love me, keep my commands. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— <sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."**

God did send an Advocate, the Spirit of truth whom we usually call the Holy Spirit. Notice how the Holy Spirit is with you and in your Circle of Grace. Think of a time when God was present and working in your life. Spend a few minutes thanking Him for His grace and gifts in your lives. When you are finished you may open your eyes.

Optional:

*Allow 30-60 seconds for reflection. When most of the young people have opened their eyes, ask the following question. Allow a few of them to share if they wish. You may choose to talk about a time when you knew God was very present for you. If possible, allow the young people to share first.*

Would anyone like to talk about a time when you knew God was with you?

*(Optional extended lesson opening - see end of Grade 6 lessons)*

## **Getting Started**

### **Review**

1. *Distribute and collect the pre-assessment (see the end of Grade 6 lessons). The results will be recorded on the evaluation.*
2. *Suggested opening:*  
It is important that we understand our Circle of Grace. We listened to Scripture tell us of Jesus' promise to come to us, that the Holy Spirit of God would dwell within us and be with us.  
We use our arms to help imagine just how close God is to us at all times.
3. *Leader demonstrates the "Sensing our Circle of Grace" exercise:*

**Raise your hands above your head and then bring  
your arms slowly down keeping them outstretched.  
Extend your arms in front of you  
and then behind you  
embracing all of the space around you  
knowing that God is in this space with you.  
Then slowly reach down to your feet.  
This is your  
Circle of Grace.  
You are in it.**

4. Jesus told us that he would always love us and always be with us. If God is always with us, we are always in a special, holy place. That place is our Circle of Grace. This is the place the Holy Spirit is with us and within us.
5. *Show young people the Circle of Grace symbol. Ask what they see in the symbol. Prompt if needed for the following parts to be identified:*
  - a. Red Circle of Grace Words - Color of the Holy Spirit
  - b. Person - Child of God
  - c. Yellow Circle - Grace
  - d. Dove - Holy Spirit
  - e. Blue Background - the world around us



6. Reinforce the following concepts:

- a. We are in a Circle of Grace with God and surrounded by God's love. We will behave with respect for ourselves and for others.
- b. We are sacred, holy, and unique because God has created each of us in His image and likeness.

## Lesson Development

### Presentation – The Puzzle that is You

- Each of us is a special and unique person with our own Circle of Grace. Have you ever worked a jigsaw puzzle? In a way, the Kingdom of God is like a whole puzzle, and each of us is a unique piece of that puzzle.
- Each of us is unique, not like anyone else who has ever lived. Our piece of the puzzle will not fit just anywhere. We are not interchangeable.
- Our shape and design are created by God to be one of a kind. There is no other person in the world like you. No one else can ever take your place in the Kingdom of God.
- Jigsaw puzzle pieces are cut and don't change. We are not like that.
- God created us with a dream in mind, and we get to help with the dream. It is as if we are puzzle pieces that have to cooperate for us to be fully who God wants us to be.
- One way we cooperate is to know what our gifts and talents are and to use them.
- It is important that we respect and value who we are and who others are.

### Activity (Consider having the youth reflect on related Scripture: Psalm 139:14, Jer.1:5)

1. Everyone will take a puzzle piece and make it into something that will help the rest of us understand more about who you are. You can draw on it; make a collage using pictures, etc. Decorate your puzzle piece with those things that say something about the real you. Then cut out the puzzle piece and write your name on the back.
2. Before you begin, ask yourself the questions from the handout and write out your responses (*copy of handout at end of the Grade 6 lessons*)
  - **What are some things that people have told you that you are good at?** God often lets you see your gifts and talents through other people.
  - **Whom do you admire? What qualities in them would you like to develop in yourself?** This is God's way of helping you recognize qualities you would like to imitate.
  - **What are some things that you enjoy doing? Do you like art or writing? Do you take care of animals or the environment?** Using your special gifts brings pleasure to you and to God.
  - **What are your hopes and dreams for yourself?** What would you like to be or to do? Our hopes and dreams are special gifts that God uses to help us understand God's dream for us.

- **What are some special things about your personality?** Are you patient or kind? Do you have a great smile, or are you always ready to help out? Are you funny? Do you notice when others are hurting?

*When the young people are finished, collect the puzzle pieces to save for use in lesson 2.*

## **Lesson Closing**<sup>10</sup> *(see the end of Grade 6 lessons)*

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

**Leader:** But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine.

**Response:** Eternal God, we bear your name, your imprint.

**Leader:** For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior.

**Response:** You have impressed your son Jesus, your likeness, on us and we are yours.

**Leader:** Because you are precious in my eyes and glorious, and because I love you.

**Response:** We ask you that we may mirror your life in us and reflect your grace in all our human relationships as Christ our brother did in serving this world today and every day, forever and ever.

**All:** Amen

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<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 43:1-4 with adaptation from Van Breeman, Peter SJ, The God Who Won't Let Go. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2001.

# Pre-Assessment Grade 6

Write the correct word or phrase for each definition.

Circle of Grace

Respect

Trusted Adult

Boundary

- |       |    |  |
|-------|----|--|
| _____ | 1. | Being kind to others and doing what's best for myself and others.  |
| _____ | 2. | A border or limit that defines our Circle of Grace. It tells us whether something belongs or does not belong in our Circle of Grace. |
| _____ | 3. | The love and goodness of God that always surrounds me.   |
| _____ | 4. | A grown-up who helps me to stay safe in my Circle of Grace and to respect others within their Circle of Grace.                       |

Circle the correct answer.

- |             |              |  |
|-------------|--------------|--|
| <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> | 5. Feelings are something I sense inside myself (angry, sad, happy, afraid, embarrassed, confused, excited, etc.) that give me information about myself or others. |
| <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> | 6. Unsafe touch is disrespectful, hurts, scares, or makes me feel uncomfortable or confused.   |
| <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> | 7. Always talk to a trusted adult when a situation or secret makes me feel unsafe or confused.   |

Circle the correct answer for the following situations.

- |             |               |   |
|-------------|---------------|---|
| <b>Safe</b> | <b>Unsafe</b> | 8. Your big brother's friend wants you to watch a movie your mom or dad told you not to watch.  |
| <b>Safe</b> | <b>Unsafe</b> | 9. Your dad is planning a surprise birthday party for your mom.   |
| <b>Safe</b> | <b>Unsafe</b> | 10. An instructor at your school invites you and a friend to go to a movie on a Friday night. The instructor offers to take you and bring you home. He says he will pay for the movie and refreshments. |

# *Pre-Assessment Grade 6 Key*

Write the correct word or phrase for each definition.

Circle of Grace

Respect

Trusted Adult

Boundary

Respect

1. Being kind to others and doing what's best for myself and others.

Boundary

2. A border or limit that defines our Circle of Grace. It tells us whether something belongs or does not belong in our Circle of Grace.

Circle of Grace

3. The love and goodness of God that always surrounds me.

Trusted Adult

4. A grown-up who helps me to stay safe in my Circle of Grace and to respect others within their Circle of Grace.

Circle the correct answer.

**True**

5. Feelings are something I sense inside myself (angry, sad, happy, afraid, embarrassed, confused, excited, etc.) that give me information about myself or others.

**True**

6. Unsafe touch is disrespectful, hurts, scares, or makes me feel uncomfortable or confused.

**True**

7. Always talk to a trusted adult when a situation or secret makes me feel unsafe or confused.

Circle the correct answer for the following situations.

**Unsafe**

8. Your big brother's friend wants you to watch a movie your mom or dad told you not to watch.

**Safe**

9. Your dad is planning a surprise birthday party for your mom.

**Unsafe**

10. An instructor at your school invites you and a friend to go to a movie on a Friday night. The instructor offers to take you and bring you home. He says he will pay for the movie and refreshments.

# *Activity Handout*

1. **What are some things that people have told you that you are good at?** God often lets you see your gifts and talents through other people.
2. **Who do you admire? What qualities in them would you like to develop in yourself?** This is God's way of helping you recognize qualities you would like to imitate.
3. **What are some things that you enjoy doing? Do you like art or writing? Do you take care of animals or the environment?** Using your special gifts brings pleasure to you and to God.
4. **What are your hopes and dreams for yourself?** What would you like to be or to do? Our hopes and dreams are special gifts that God uses to help us understand God's dream for us.
5. **What are some special things about your personality?** Are you patient or kind? Do you have a great smile, or are you always ready to help out? Are you funny? Do you notice when others are hurting?