

Session Theme: Sexting Safe Environment Lesson

Outcomes

The learner will be able to:

- Appreciate being created in God's image and likeness.
- Understand the Trinity as the perfect example of a love relationship.
- Explore the components of being an integrated human being.
- Understand what sexting is and the consequences of sexting.

Opening Activity/Icebreaker

Begin with an icebreaker from the Circles of Care suggested opening activities, if desired.

Opening Prayer

(10 - 15 minutes)

Gather in the sacred space of the church, chapel or prepared prayer environment. Lead the group into silence and allow the silence to deepen – at least two full minutes of quiet.

Prayer:

Leader: Let us begin our prayer together
In the Name of the Father...

Leader: God of all Life and Love, you
created us in your image and likeness.

All: We praise you!

Leader: You fill us with your love and life and choose to dwell within us.

All: We thank you!

Leader: Gifted with your Holy Spirit, deepen your image, your love and your life in us.

All: We ask you.

Leader: Bless us with your mercy as we strive to learn and express what true love is.

All: For we are your daughters and sons.

Scripture Reading:

1 Corinthians 6: 17-20

What You Will Need for this Session

Copies of Opening Prayer

Area of the church or other prayer space
prepared with:

- Table covered with cloth of liturgical color of the season
- Candle - battery powered
- Bible

Leader of Prayer

Reader

Copies of Closing Prayer, either "The Prayer of Thomas Merton," or other appropriate prayer, for each participant.



Brief Pause for silent reflection (at least 3 full minutes)

Intentions

*Prepare intentions about events in the Church and the world, for the sick and those who have died.
Invite the teens to offer intentions for people and needs in their lives.*

Response: *God of Love and Life, hear our prayer. OR Lord, hear our prayer.*
Close the intentions by praying together the *Our Father*.

Exchange a Sign of Peace and/or pray together the following:

The Prayer of Thomas Merton

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you and I hope that
I have that desire in all that I am doing.
And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road although
I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death, I
will not fear, for you are ever with me and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Catechetical Session

(40 – 50 minutes)

Re-gather the group in the space for the session; e.g., parish hall, meeting room, etc.

Introduction

(5 – 10 minutes)

Set the framework for a presentation and discussion on the dignity of the human person by drawing on the experience of the Opening Activity/Icebreaker or choose one of the options listed below:

1. Using one of the following Scripture Passages (dignity of the human person; God's love for each/every person) ask the teens to share what the passage means to them.
 - Genesis 1: 26-27
 - John 15: 12
 - 1 Corinthians 6: 17 – 20 (from the Opening Prayer)

2. Relate the Opening Activity/Icebreaker experience to one of the following sayings to emphasize that we are whole persons and not just what others see on the outside:
 - “A picture is worth a thousand words.”
 - “The clothes make the man (person).”
 - Another current saying the adolescents would know, be familiar with and/or use that conveys how bodies “speak.”

Presentation

(20 – 30 minutes)

Please refer to the Catechist Guide for details about the purpose and content of this session.

PART I: God’s love; the Trinity; relationships

At the heart of our Catholic Faith is God’s love for each of us. This love is rooted in and overflows from God’s very self, the Trinity. The loving relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are extended and embrace each person, drawing us into their Life and Love. The loving relationship of the Trinity is the model for all relationships.

Invite the teens to think of the relationships in their life. Invite them to think about and select a friend or family member with whom they have a special relationship. Ask them to share what is special about the relationship and why/how they have become important to one another over time. After a few minutes of sharing, ask the group if there are any unspoken rules or expectations involved in their special relationships.

Try to illicit from teens these characteristics and others they may suggest. Special relationships are characterized by mutual trust, communication (talking and listening), acceptance, respecting boundaries of time and personal space, confidentiality (not including secrets that put someone at risk), concern for health and safety.

PART II: Created in God's image and likeness; sexual identity; living as integrated human beings

All persons are created in God's image and likeness. "Male and female He created them." (Genesis 1: 27) Our sexuality is so much more than what many people and our culture simplify and refer to as "sex." When associated only with our physical bodies or as a marketing tool, sex is no longer the gift that God intended it to be. Such a limited perception harms our understanding and appreciation of what it means to be whole human beings, male and female. It presents a disjointed version of who we are rather than an integrated portrait of spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual human beings.

Ask the teens for examples of disjointed or fractured images and messages about sexuality. Don't be afraid to allow them to utilize their media devices to accomplish this task, or, if you prefer, distribute the printed sources you have brought.

If you have secured internet access and a power-point you can search the media images teens suggest and display them to the group. Dialogue with the teens their perceptions of these images and why these images are fractured or disjointed. Take the opportunity to share some of the images you prepared and explain why you chose them.

Now ask teens to offer alternate images that would reflect an integrated understanding of sexuality and display those images. Have them offer the reasons they selected them and then offer your own as well.

Living a life that integrates our sexuality – having a sense of inner unity of body and spirit/ soul – is the work of a lifetime. It is what is known as "chastity" and involves self-knowledge, self-discipline, practicing the virtues, obeying the commandments and being faithful to prayer. Because we are people in relationship with God and other people, chastity blossoms in friendship and presupposes respect for the rights of others.

What You Will Need for this Session

Suggested resources needed for Part II

Internet access
PowerPoint projector
sport, athletic, dance, beauty magazines
store catalogs appealing to young people (i.e. Abercrombie)

Before this segment

Select a movie clip, television segment, popular song, magazine, television or web advertisement that portrays disjointed or fractured images about sexuality. Then select alternate images that would reflect an integrated understanding of sexuality. Prepare a visual, power-point or hanging display that you can utilize during discussion.

PART III: Moral character; sexting

Scripture and Catholic Tradition see the heart as the seat of morality. The sixth Beatitude speaks of the “pure of heart” and St. Paul reminds us that our body is a “temple of the Holy Spirit.” (Opening Prayer for this session) Honoring our bodies and our relationship with God and each other is very challenging. It is even more challenging with all of the pressure that our culture puts on us to be, look and act in certain ways and, in some cases, at all costs.

Ask the teens what types of technology and social media they frequently utilize (Skype, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook) and what types of photos they post (i.e., events, activities, friends, selfies, etc.), particularly if sexting has not come up yet.

Consider introducing an opportunity for the group to share experiences of sexting they have read or know about. Elicit from them some of the possible reasons for sexting and why people do it.

Use the information on the NetSmartz handout, Child Lures poster, catechist guide, and *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, p. 270 (Appendix B) as a basis for a discussion about:

- Sexting statistics and definition
- Possible consequences of sexting
- Practical and faith-based ways to resist sexting and for training moral character

Pose the following question to the teens:

Why live a moral life if you can sin now and ask for forgiveness later?

Ask the teens to...

Consider this analogy: Think of judgment akin to running a marathon. A marathon is 26.2 miles. If a person doesn't regularly train for a marathon, what are the chances he or she will actually finish? Further, what if they spent their whole “training” time sitting on the couch, watching TV and eating nothing but lots of junk food? While we must allow for the technicality, if a person doesn't train their moral character the logical conclusion is that they won't be capable of taking responsibility for their sins and seeking forgiveness.

(*The Way*, Teacher Guide, Our Sunday Visitor, 2014, Chapter 1, p. 9)

Announcements for Future Youth Ministry Events

(5 minutes)

Closing Prayer

(5 – 10 Minutes)

Call to Prayer

As we close our time together, let us recall that Christ is always in our midst as Light and that in baptism we have been given a share in that Light and are called to share it with each other and our world.

(Allow a brief period of silence to help the group become more aware of God's presence.)

Pray the following or similar prayer with the teens:

Dear Jesus, help me to live a life pleasing to you.

Help me to do what is right and to be strong enough
to say "No" to those things that are against your will.

Let me be an example of your love and kindness
to my family, friends, and all I meet.

Help me to respect myself
by avoiding places and people that would do injury to me.

Help me to respect others
by not pressuring them to deny their God-given dignity.

Especially give me the courage and strength
to live chastely, honoring the gift of my sexuality and that of others.

Strengthen me, too, so that I may avoid and encourage others to avoid
sexual intercourse and other intimate sexual activity outside of marriage.

Jesus, you were always a friend to those in pain or trouble.

If I should make a mistake and fail in these efforts,
please forgive and help me.

I know that you will always be with me
to lift me up and show me the right way to go.
Amen.

(Based on the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry *True Love Waits* program)
