

KNOWING MY VALUE

GRADES 7-9 - Lesson I (Year III, Day 2)

Goal: To explore the human need for relationship and understand that loneliness is a normal experience. This lesson will teach students to recognize when a classmate may be feeling isolated and in need of special attention

Lesson: Human beings were made for relationship. Our very existence depends on our relationship with God. His love holds each person in existence at every moment. If God stopped loving someone, they wouldn't simply disappear; it would be as if they never existed in the first place. God also said, "It is not good that the man should be alone;" (Gen 2:18). God is Trinity, a community of three Persons. By His very nature He is in relationship, and He wants us also to be in relationships too – with Himself and with other human beings.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less part of the body....The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greatest honor...If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. (1 Cor 12-15; 21-23, 26)

Watch: [Animated explanation of 1 Cor 12](#)

God created all members of the human race as one big family, as one "body". Jesus became human to gather back the scattered human race and unite us in His own body. Every person is an essential member of one human body, connected with every other person in the family of God. Each person, unique in his or her gifts, talents, and abilities, is necessary in the Body of Christ. Without each person present and being who they were created to be by God, the Body suffers.

Activity: Seeing myself in relationship

Students will create a web chart with themselves in the center, drawing 8-10 circles branching off like spokes on a bicycle wheel. In each of the outer circles, they should write the name of someone who is influential and/or

essential for them and with whom they have a relationship. These could be parents, siblings, grandparents, coaches, teammates, teachers, friends, coworkers, etc. On the lines connecting the circles, they should write down the relationship or how they know each other. Challenge them to add 'spokes' connecting the people in their circle to one another. Who else could be added in order to make as many connections as possible? The challenge is to make the web as complex as possible.

Activity: Seeing the Value of Others

Have the students write down the names of each person in the room and list ways that each person's existence has affected them. This could be anything from, "he has been my best friend since third grade" to "she was in my group for the Science Fair project" to "he steals my French fries at lunch every day." Encourage the students to imagine how their lives would be different if they had never met them. Next to each person they should write how they have been changed (for better or for worse) by knowing that person. It's important to be specific. For example, "I am more joyful when I am around him," "I have learned time-management from working with her," "I have to practice patience when talking with him," or "I want to be more outgoing like she is." After they have completed the activity, they should choose 2-4 people from the list and share with them how they have affected their life in a positive way. Encourage them to pick at least one person they wouldn't ordinarily talk with.

Loneliness

The youth of today are often described as the "loneliest" generation. Loneliness is less about the number of friends you have, or likes and shares of social media than it is about how you feel. Even the most popular and outgoing people can feel intensely alone. And, while some people are happy to spend their time solo, others may feel very isolated and lonely, even when they are part of a group or larger social circle.

Feeling left out or lonely happens to all of us from time to time. The feelings associated with this---sadness, frustration, relief, puzzlement---are all common and normal to experience. Psychologists have found that certain life experiences can increase the risk of experiencing isolation – for example: being the new kid at school, struggling with gender identity or sexuality, having a family in crisis, or being bullied. The virtual world also makes it easier for young people to become isolated, cutting themselves off from community activities to pursue intense online relationships which are not ultimately satisfying and rarely last. Comparing themselves with the images on social media can also make them mistakenly perceive themselves as less connected than their peers, reinforcing feelings of isolation.

Discussion:

- What are some ways to notice that one of your peers might be feeling lonely or isolated?

(they rarely speak in class; they don't participate in extracurricular activities; they sit alone at lunch or stay behind in the classroom; they are always on their phone when others are having fun; they don't seem to have close friends)

- What can you do to help reach out to someone who seems withdrawn or isolated?

(invite them to have lunch with you; ask them about something you notice they are interested in; send a friendly text message to say "hi" and let them know you see them; ask them to help you with your homework)

- What are some ways that you can help yourself feel more connected when you are feeling lonely or isolated?

(talk to a trusted adult about your feelings; join a club or after-school activity; put away your phone at lunch-time; invite someone to hang out after school; go to an activity or social event even when you don't feel like it)

Important note to share with students:

Feelings of loneliness and isolation can be very painful and sometimes lead to thoughts of self-harm. If anyone shares with you that they have considered hurting themselves, encourage them to seek help and support. No one needs to be alone with these feelings. If someone tells you that they have recently attempted to end their life or have made a plan to do so, it is important to tell a trusted adult immediately and/or call 9-8-8 (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) to connect with a trained counsellor who can offer support and advice for yourself or a friend.

Watch: [Testimony of overcoming the temptation to suicide](#)

Explanation: The video mentions an organization called "[NET Ministries](#)" (National Evangelization Teams). NET provides the opportunity for young people to give a year or two of service traveling throughout the country and the world spreading the Gospel to other young people in parishes and schools.

Discussion:

What led the girl in the video to the point of despair?

Do you think it was God that intervened in her life?

Why was she able to deal with the crisis of her parents' divorce in a healthier way than she dealt with the crisis she experienced in 8th grade?

What did she find in the Catholic Mass that she didn't find elsewhere in her life, even the other church services she attended?

Resources for Teachers and Parents

This lesson is part of the suicide prevention program of the Archdiocese of New York and so we have included some additional resources on the topic for teachers and parents.

Helpguide.org information on [Teen Depression and Suicide](#) and [Anxiety in Children and Teens](#). Valuable resource for parents and educators to understand symptoms and warning signs and know how to help.

[ADAPP Suicide Prevention](#). A video training series to help parents and educators prevent suicide among youth.

[New York State Office of Mental Health](#) offers information on suicide prevention, including trainings, workshops, and learning modules:

The [Samaritans NYC](#) offer non-faith-based information on suicide: suicide prevention hotlines and also for “suicide survivors,” those who are left behind to sort through “what happened,”

[Solace House Suicide Prevention Center](#) (two NY locations: Long Island City, Queens; and Yonkers), to prevent suicide and also for suicide bereavement. (718) 482-0001;

Suicide can be a challenging topic for everyone, but please remember that help is always available (24/7) for anyone suffering from depression or having thoughts of suicide. For confidential guidance for your child, or anyone:

Call, text, or chat 9-8-8

Similar to 911, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is a national hotline that connects a caller in a mental health crisis to a trained counselor who can address their immediate needs (and even help connect them to ongoing care if they desire).