

THE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF GOD

GRADES 7-9 - Knowing My Value Lesson II (Year I, Day 5)

Goal: To recognize our unique dignity as human beings, made in the image and likeness of God and infinitely loved by Him. To learn healthy ways to deal with struggles and challenges in life.

Materials: Handouts: Top Ten Trouble Situations, Problem Solving Form

Watch: [Irreplaceable](#) from the Sisters of Life

Discussion:

- What events in our lives can make us *feel* “replaceable”?
- What is the truth about each person?

Lesson:

Every human person is made in the image and likeness of God. God created us to be relationship with Him and with others. If you think about your face for a moment – you have eyes that are directed to “the other” – you can’t even see yourself (unless of course you look into a mirror). When God creates a new human being, he doesn’t do it remotely. He is so intimately involved in the creation of each new person that we call him “Father.” His relationship to us is one of a parent to a child, and though sometimes our own earthly relationships with our parents are imperfect, God loves us unconditionally in every instant of our lives. There is nothing we can ever do that will remove us from God’s love. Though we may forget Him or turn our backs on our faith, God loves us the way a shepherd loves his sheep, going in search of the one that has wandered off. God pursues us throughout our lives, inviting us into relationship with Him at every opportunity. Our deepest identity is that we are **loved by God**.

Watch: [The Truth about You](#)

This video speaks to some of the lies that keep us from believing we are good and lovable.

Discussion:

- Is it hard to believe that we are good and lovable? Why or why not
- How do our emotions affect our self-image?

- What are some of the common lies that teens struggle with? (Fill in the blanks: “I’m not ___ enough.” “I’m too ___.”)
- How do these lies affect us?

Lesson:

In today’s lesson, we’ll explore some of these struggles and God’s desire to bring us hope in all circumstances. He loves each person. He sees you as good and infinitely valuable. He wants each person to believe this about themselves too.

When it is hard to see the value and meaning of our lives, we can feel worthless or depressed. Sometimes these feelings can even lead a person to consider forms of self-harm such as drug-use, cutting or suicide.

Suicide is always wrong. At times, in the midst of overwhelming mental, emotional, or spiritual suffering it can seem like a genuine, or even the only, solution. But suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem or situation. It causes terrible pain to our family and friends who care about us, and especially to the God who loves us. It is not up to us to decide when our lives should end – God has created us with infinite value and we have a responsibility to care for ourselves.

We can never judge the consciences of those who have died by suicide as they may not have acted with full knowledge or consent of the will, due to psychological disturbance or other factors. We pray for them with trust in God’s merciful love. We do know that God always desires to reach out to those who are struggling to believe in the value of their life and remind them that they are loved.

If you or someone you know is struggling with depression, anxiety or thoughts of suicide, don’t be afraid to reach out for help. Talk to a trusted adult or, for confidential, or even anonymous, help there are several other resources available to you.

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).

Watch: [The Struggle Bus](#)

This video speaks to how all of us have struggles and problems in our lives and how we be in solidarity with others to help them bring their problems to the One who really help.

Activity: [Top Ten Trouble Situations](#)

We never need to feel “stuck” in our problems. There are lots of simple and practical tools we can use to navigate challenges on a daily basis.

Lead the students through the “Top Ten Trouble Situation” exercise, helping them to identify situations in their day-to-day life that are upsetting or challenging in some way.

Activity: [Problem Solving Form](#)

Have the students choose one of the situations they listed in the previous exercise and use the “Problem Solving Form” to work through possible courses of action. Discuss the benefits of using a tool like this when facing a difficult situation.

Watch: [Loved Unconditionally](#)

Learning to navigate challenging situations can help us to stay grounded in our identity as beloved sons and daughters of God. When we don’t know or understand what it means to be made in God’s image, it can be hard to see the value and meaning of our lives. It’s so important to remember that God has given us tremendous value and we have a responsibility to care for ourselves and to ask for help when we need it.

Discussion:

- How would this message help someone who was struggling?
- What do people tend to ground their identity in?
- How would our lives be different if we believed in God’s unconditional love for us at every moment?
- What helps you to believe in God’s love for you?

Prayer: Plan to make a Holy Hour or take time in the school chapel or parish church next class so the students have an opportunity to tell Jesus their struggles and to ask for His help.

Look at a crucifix next time you feel lost or hopeless. Let it remind you of just how much God loves you. And of how much He wishes to help you secure a place in His Heavenly Kingdom for yourself and others! You are so precious to God. God loves you and has a good plan for your life!

Prayer for Hope

Heavenly Father, I come before you today in need of hope.

There are times when I feel helpless.

There are times when I feel weak.

I pray for hope.

I need hope for a better future. I need hope for a better life.

I need hope for love and kindness.

Father, thank you for sending your Son to bring me life—

Life to the fullest; life for eternity.

Thank you for allowing me to share in Christ's Resurrection.

*Christ is alive in me, and His Spirit dwells deeply in my being,
even when I cannot see you or even feel your presence.*

Thank you for making all things possible for those who believe.

Thank you for guiding me right now.

May I continue to receive guidance and hope from you

This hour and every hour. Amen.

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:

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