

**High School Level, Grades 9 through 12 (ages 15 to 18 years)**

**Lesson Plan 5: Grooming—Recognizing risky adult behavior—Teacher Planning and Preparation**

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**Getting started with Lesson 5:**

- Principle:** To identify grooming behaviors of potential abusers. Specifically:
- 1) Adults that give gifts without permission and then instruct the child not to tell anyone about the gift or where they got it, and
  - 2) Emphasize to children when to refuse to go where an adult is trying to take them and when to refuse to do what an adult asks you to do.
- Catechism:** Man is obliged to follow the moral law, which urges him “to do what is good and avoid what is evil” (cf. *GS* 16). This law makes itself heard in his conscience. **#1713**
- “To love is to will the good of another.” (cf. *MK* 7:21) All other affections have their source in this first movement of the human heart toward the good. Only the good can be loved. Passions “are evil if love is evil and good if it is good.” **#1766**
- Goal:** To assist children in recognizing the risky, frightening, or confusing behaviors that adults exhibit, and to teach children how to trust their own instincts and resist the overtures of a potential molester.
- Objectives:** To give children the ability to begin to identify and define adult behaviors that indicate that the person wants more than friendship in the relationship and to trust their own instincts about what is “okay” and what is “not okay.” The goal is not to teach them all of the warning signs but to concentrate on two specific areas: 1) an adult who gives gifts without permission and instructs the child not to tell and 2) respecting their own instincts when adults’ requests make them feel uncomfortable or are confusing. The specific learning goals are:
- Children learning to distinguish between a gift given from love and generosity and one that is given as an attempt to trap them in a cycle of secrecy.
  - Children learning that they can say “no” when they feel uncomfortable or confused by how an older person is acting—even if the older person is someone they love and trust.
  - Children learning that they should not go with or meet alone with an adult in an isolated or out-of-the-way area where no one else is around.
  - Children learning that they can speak up and tell a trusted adult when someone’s behavior makes them feel uncomfortable or uneasy.

**Dealing with the teens: “Searching” is the key concept**

This is the age where all the experiences that began with puberty—the physical changes the developing emotions. The self-consciousness deepens and matures. The world of “children” is now renounced. Teens believe in their immortality and may tend to be reckless in behavior. Although it would appear that they reject

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authority while defining their own independence, in reality they rely on the strength and support they find in parents and meaningful adults.

**Supplies:** Opening Video  
Prayer Handout/Poster  
TV and VCR  
Boom box or CD player and Church music

**Activity #1:** **NOTE TO TEACHER: If you have a typical prayer service that you use to start class, use it for this session also. If not, please consider the suggestions provided and create an appropriate prayer opening for the class.**

Suggested prayer formats:

- Place a small table at the front of the room next to the teacher. Cover it with a beautiful scarf. Place an open Bible on the table along with a candle and, if available, a flower or a symbol that represents all students or the students in the class. Use the same prayer for opening and closing the lesson. Light the candle and have someone lead the other young people in reciting the prayer on the poster.
- Form a circle of silence around a lighted candle and listen to (or sing along with) an appropriate Christian song in the background such as: "You are Mine" by David Haas, "Here I Am, Lord" by Dan Schutte, "You Are Near" by Dan Schutte or another that you find appropriate. Invite the students to join in saying the prayer together.  
NOTE: It is great to have music playing while the students enter the classroom. However, be sure that the last song played during the opening prayer is slow and thoughtful. Spirited songs will leave you with spirited students.
- Have music playing in the background as the students come in to class. Ask everyone to be seated and get quiet. Play one last song and offer this prayer and intentions:
  - Loving God, we come before You today to ask Your guidance and wisdom so that we may know and do Your will and walk with You each day. We offer these intentions as we begin our prayer together today.
    - For all students who suffer abuse that they may feel God's loving arms enfold them and take away their pain.
    - For all those who harm students that they may seek forgiveness and turn away from harming others.
    - For all parents and others who care about children and young people that they learn how to protect them and make sure that they are safe from intentional harm.
    - [Ask for other intentions that the students wish to bring.]
  - For these intentions and all those that we hold in our hearts, we ask this in the name of Jesus your son. Amen.

Show video if appropriate.

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Poster or other display with scripture James 1: 13, 16, 17. NOTE: The scripture quote is on the website. You can recreate it on a poster or an easel in the front of the room. You might also make a sign or write it out carefully on the chalkboard or white board.

NOTE TO TEACHER: The following scripture is specifically for this lesson with the high school kids. "...each person is tempted when he is lured by his own desires...Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers and sisters; all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down for the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change." It would be effective to recreate this message on a poster or to write it carefully on a chalkboard]

Box of Powdered Sugar

Box of Cornstarch

Serving bowls enough for two or more groups of students with no more than 8 students in any one group. (Square bowls if possible)

2 Mailing Labels for each bowl.

1 spoon for each student

**Discussion:**

NOTE: Invite the students to sit in chairs or on the floor in a way that creates an atmosphere of togetherness and openness. This is an opportunity for the students to share what has happened to them. They can draw on their own experiences and observations over time to use the discussion questions to begin to distinguish between gift giving that is an expression of pure, wholesome love and friendship and gift giving that is a tool used by people whose intention is to do harm.

**TEACHER: "Other than the fact that you really like to get them, what do you think of when I say 'gift.'"**

NOTE: Let the young people talk about each of the questions in this section. For example, invite the young people to talk about what a gift is and encourage them to think beyond the package wrapped in pretty paper and topped with a big bow that is given on special occasions such as birthdays and Christmas.

**TEACHER: "It seems ridiculous to even ask that question, doesn't it? However, a gift is something more than a package wrapped in paper with a bow on top or a gift bag filled with items and colorful tissue paper. The dictionary defines "gift" as "something that is bestowed voluntarily and without compensation."<sup>1</sup> It also defines "bestow" as presenting or conferring something.<sup>2</sup> Without compensation" means what?"** NOTE: Students shout out the answers.

**"Yes, when you get something without compensation it means that you did not have to pay for it. However, 'without compensation' means a great deal more than without payment. It really means that nothing is expected in return. That means that if there is ANY condition or expectation, it is not really a gift. "**

**"So, if a gift is something that is given or presented to us and nothing is expected in return, what else would you consider to be a gift?"**

NOTE: Encourage the students to talk through this issue for themselves.

<sup>1</sup> / The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

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NOTE: It is important that the young people begin to expand their idea of what constitutes a gift. Many of the traditional things are included when we talk about gifts, but there is much more that can be considered as a gift and child molesters will use everything that they have.

- Some gifts are easily identified as a “gift,” others are not quite so obvious, and still others look like gifts but are not gifts at all.
- It is the intention behind the giving of the gift that must be clarified.
- Sometimes we are tempted to overlook the intention behind the gift because
  - It is something that we really want and this is our only chance to get it.
  - It might look weird to others if we decline the gift.
  - A friend—or someone we think is a friend—is urging us to take the gift.
- Gifts from parents, family members, and friends that recognize special occasions or acknowledge accomplishments are great and should be cherished and appreciated. However, these gifts are never or at least should never be given in secret on the condition that parents and guardians are kept in the dark. When these conditions are placed upon the giving—it is not a gift.
- Some gifts don't come in packages. Someone buying you lunch or paying for you to go to the movies can also be a gift.
- Someone allowing you to do something that you know your parents would not approve of or to wear something that your parents would object to or to go somewhere your parents would not permit you to go may seem like a gift but it is not. The giver may expect something in return—and they may not let you know that immediately.

**“What are some reasons that people—other than parents and guardians, grandparents, and family members—give gifts? What if they ask you to keep it a secret?”**

**Points to make:**

NOTE: It is important that this discussion clarify the difference between gifts that are appropriate expressions of love and friendship and those that are tools for manipulation and control.

- There are “events” and “special occasions” when students get gifts from people other than parents and family, but for the most part these events are not everyday occurrences. The gifts are given in front of others or with the permission of parents.
- Gifts are an opportunity to recognize something special or to acknowledge something such as recognition of an accomplishment or an acknowledgment of the completion of something.
- Graduation is one of the times that gifts come from friends other than our parents and family, as well as first communion and confirmation.
- Sometimes people give you things in order to “get something” from you. For example, they use the item as a bribe or an incentive to get you to do something you don't want to do or are uncomfortable doing—and they encourage you NOT to tell your parents about it.

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**“What is an example of this?”** [Example: Someone offers you a pirated CD or a video game which your parents object to you having or even playing.] THIS IS NOT A GIFT. It looks like a gift, seems like a gift, and the person giving it even says that it is a gift. It is important that all of us begin to recognize the situations when others are using these so called “gifts” to get us to do what they want—even if we don't really want to do it.

- Companies and sports teams often give gifts to people for promotional purposes. For example, the first 100 people at the opening game of the local professional baseball or basketball team get a ball cap or a new bat, or everyone who comes to opening day of a new store gets a free CD, or a store has a “buy one, get one free” promotion.
- Sometimes grandparents or aunts and uncles give gifts and then they tell you to keep it a secret. Keeping secrets about gifts is wrong, particularly when you think that your parents will be upset about the gift or may tell you to give the gift back.
- If the standard for determining whether or not something is a gift is that it is given freely and without expecting anything in return, then anything that comes with a requirement or even a strong request to keep it from your parents is not given freely “without compensation.”
- In the overall scheme of things, it may not seem like a big deal to keep a secret from your parents about a gift from a friend or family member. The key here is not whether you keep a secret from your parents—there are other issues to consider when you are dealing with that issue. The issue is keeping a secret from your parent or guardian about a gift that was given to you on the condition that you keep it a secret.

**“When someone asks you to do that, how do you feel? ”**

- Un-easy
- Un-comfortable
- Un-certain

Notice that all of these start with “un” and without the “un” they describe how we feel when a gift given is truly one from generosity and love.

**“How do you deal with those feelings—particularly when the thing that is offered is something that you really want or is something really special? Do you ignore them or talk yourself out of them or do you listen to that discomfort as if it is the God voice within you telling you that something is just not right?”**

- The reasons a person may state in order to justify the request are never enough to overcome you doing the right thing. A request to keep a gift secret from your parents is only going to put distance between you and your parents—and they won't have any idea why it is happening. They will just know that it is.
- Someone who lets you do things that your parents would not allow you to do without getting permission or gives you gifts that your parents do not know about is not a friend. Their interests are not the same as yours and their actions should always be suspect. Even though it may seem harmless to you—after all, you just disagree with your parents about this issue—the intentions of the adult involved may be very different than you think. This person does not deserve your trust, even if it is someone you trusted in the past.
- Remember from earlier lessons that safe adults and safe friends are those that respect your wishes and the wishes and rules of your parents, guardians, and caretakers when it comes to these types of issues.

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- When someone suggests that you can do something that you think your parents would not allow or accept a gift you are unsure about, tell the person that you really can't do that without first talking with your parents. If the adult or older person objects, tries to talk you out of making that call, or leaves you with the idea that it can just be your own "secret," it is best to steer clear of that person.

**"How does it make you feel when your friends, people you trust, or perhaps even your parents keep secrets from you?"**

**Points to make:**

- It might not seem like a big deal but think about how it makes you feel when your friends keep a secret from you. It makes you feel like you are an outsider and it usually hurts your feelings. The same thing happens with parents when you keep secrets from them.
- Keeping secrets about things that you know your parents would want to know creates distance between you and them. Even if they are standing beside you, it feels like they are far away because you are keeping an important secret.

**"What do you do when someone—a friend or someone you trusted in the past—asks you to keep a secret from your parents or guardians that you know you should not keep?"**

**Points to make:**

- People who say that they are your friends and then expect you to do things to prove your friendship or loyalty are not friends.
- No matter how tempting it is to go against the rules of the family or your parents' wishes, the risk of harm to you is great and along with God, the people who love you most and most want what is best for you are your parents.
- Sometimes it is hard to talk with parents about something like this because perhaps the adult whose behavior is off is a friend of theirs or, worse still, a relative. Perhaps it is difficult because you know that your parents will be upset and you don't want to cause them to be upset. If that is the case and you don't feel you can talk with your parents about what is happening, find another adult that you trust and go to that person for advice and support.
- Trust your inner voice. Listen to your own instincts and pay attention to the God voice that is telling you whether something is right or not.

**Activity #3: Who and what can you trust—except God?**

**Preparation for the activity:** Create 2 mailing labels for each bowl. One label should say "POWDERED SUGAR" and the other label should say "CORNSTARCH." Create one bowl for each group. Fill some of the bowls with powdered sugar and some with cornstarch. Remember that each one is labeled with both powdered sugar and cornstarch. **MAKE SURE THAT NO ONE SEES THE BOWLS BEFORE THE EXERCISE.** The students must not know that there are two labels on the bowl. They will each see only 1 of the labels during the exercise and will have to deal with whether to trust their own instincts and what they think rather than what is happening with their friend, who is looking at a different label.

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Have the students sit down at a table or on the floor in two lines facing each other with about 1½ to 2 feet between them. Whenever possible, let the students choose their partners in the game and encourage them to select someone that they really trust. NOTE TO TEACHER: If you have fewer than 4 students you will have to modify this exercise. Use only one bowl and choose whether it will contain cornstarch or powdered sugar.

Once the students are seated, have them close their eyes. Place one of the bowls on the surface between the first two people who are facing each other. Give each student a spoon.

**Give the following instructions while they have their eyes closed.**

1. NO TALKING UNTIL THE ENTIRE GROUP HAS DIPPED THEIR SPOONS IN THE BOWLS.
2. When you open your eyes, there will be a bowl in front of you. It has a label on it that may or may not describe what is in the bowl.
3. The first two people must dip their spoon in the bowl and take some of the substance out. You can take as little or as much as you want on your spoon. Do not do anything with what is on your spoon until everyone has a chance to get some for themselves.
4. Slide the bowl straight down to the next pair. BE CAREFUL NOT TO TURN THE BOWL AS YOU PASS IT ON.

Ask if there are any questions. If so, explain the rules again and remind them no talking then have the first two students choose how much they want of the substance in front of them.

**When everyone has put some of the substance on their spoon, tell them all to taste what they have.** Some will be tasting cornstarch that they thought was sugar and some will be tasting sugar that they thought was cornstarch. Either way, the reality will be a challenge for many of the students.

Invite them to share what this exercise tells them about what they rely on to make decisions and the validity of those factors. They may have relied on a label that they trusted to be accurate without checking it out. They may have been confused about a friend who seemed to be excited about a big spoonful of cornstarch and they may then have started to mistrust their own instincts.

This is an opportunity for them to deal with the need to listen to their internal voice—the God voice within—when something doesn't seem quite right.

**Prayer to end the lesson:**

*(Have this prayer on a poster on the wall and as a handout for the students to pray along with you and take home with them. It is a variation of an Old Catholic Traveler's Prayer to be said before beginning the journey. Remind the students that as they grow up, they are on a kind of journey through life. Each time they leave their own home or their own room to go out on their own, they are traveling. Prayer can help prepare them for the journey and guide them along the way.)*

My holy Angel Guardian,  
 Ask the Lord to bless the journey that I undertake,  
 That it may benefit the health of my soul and body;  
 That I may reach its end,  
 And that, returning safe and sound,  
 I may find my family in good health.  
 Guard, guide and preserve us throughout the day and night.

Amen.

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