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**Lesson 5: Junior High Level, Grades 6, 7, 8 (ages 11 to 14 years)**


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- 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.

**Activity #2:** **Classroom Discussion:** **NOTE:** Invite the students to sit in chairs or on the floor in a way that creates an atmosphere of togetherness and openness. Most students at this age are trying to find themselves without being embarrassed or standing out in a way that demonstrates their feelings about something. The discussion is designed in a way that allows for the students to speak about these issues conceptually rather than from personal experience. They don't have to share what has happened to them but they can draw on their own experience and their own 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:** "Today we are going to have a conversation about 'gifts.' When we talk about 'gifts' what do you think we mean?"

[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>4</sup> It also defines 'bestow' as presenting or conferring something.<sup>5</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. 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?"

**Points to make:**

- Sometimes gifts can be expensive and sometimes they can be simple.
- It is the intention behind the giving of the gift that must be clarified.
- 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 given in secret on the condition that parents and guardians are kept in the dark.

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<sup>4</sup> The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

<sup>5</sup> Id.



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- Some gifts don't come in packages. Gifts can be anything such as someone buying you lunch or paying for you to go to the movies.
- [NOTE: It is important that the young people begin to expand their idea of what constitutes a gift. All those traditional things are included when we talk about gifts but there is much more that can be considered a gift and child molesters will use everything that they have.]

**“What are some reasons that people—other than parents and guardians, grandparents and family members—give gifts?”**

**Points to make:**

- There are “events” and “special occasions” when they get gifts from people other than parents and family, but for the most part these are unusual and public. 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.
- Sometimes people give you things in order to “get something” from the 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. It looks like a gift, seems like a gift, and the person giving it even says that it is a gift. However, THIS IS NOT A GIFT. It is important that all of us begin to recognize these situations when others are using these so called “gifts” to get you to do what they want—even if you don't want to do it.

**“What kind of gifts might we get from people other than our parents or members of the family?”**

**Points to make:**

- At a birthday party or at Christmas time, we may get gifts from lots of different people.
- A Youth Minister or teacher may present you with a gift acknowledging a major accomplishment.
- Graduation is one of the times that gifts come from friends other than our parents and family, as well as first communion and confirmation.
- 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 the new store gets a free CD or a store has a “buy one, get one free” promotion.

**“What about people who give you a gift and tell you to keep it is a secret?”**

**Points to make:**

- Sometimes grandparents and/or aunts and uncles give gifts and tell children to keep it a secret. Teachers need to reinforce the message that keeping secrets about gifts is wrong even if the child thinks that the parents will be upset about the gift or may ask them to give the gift back.

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- If the criteria for determining whether something is a gift are that it is given freely and without the expectation of anything in return, then this is not a gift. Keeping it from your parents *is* what is expected in return. 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.
- Deliberately keeping things from your parents or guardians puts distance between you and them. Distance is like a wall or a barrier that comes between you and someone else all because of some secret you are keeping that you know your parents would want to know.

**“Why would someone do that?”**

**Points to make:**

- Sometimes grandparents are frustrated by parents' rules about gifts or that they realize that they are going overboard and want to keep from making parents mad.
- Other times people use this as a way to come between you and your parents or to manipulate and control you so that they can lure you into doing something you don't really want to do, something you don't feel comfortable doing, or something of which you know your parents would not approve.

**“What would be a “good” purpose or intention for someone asking that you keep a gift a secret from parents or guardians and what other purpose might someone have for making that request?”**

**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.

- 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.
- 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 kinds of issues.
- 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 first you need to call and check in 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 hurts your feelings.

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This happens with your parents when you keep secrets from them. They feel like outsiders and it hurts their feelings.

- 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 withholding 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. Along with God, the people who love you most and 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 questionable 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 that. If that is the case and you don't feel you can talk with your parents about what is happening, go to another adult whom you trust for advice and support.

**“What would you say is the most important message for you to remember out of this lesson?”**

[NOTE: Using a chalk board, white board or easel and paper, make a list of the things they learned during the discussion. Encourage them to list everything. At the end of class, have each student create a self-addressed envelope. Let them know that we all realize that we learn better when we hear things more than once. Tell them that in order to help them take full advantage of all that they learned today, you will send them a copy of this list before the next session. Then recreate the boards on paper and mail the list out to each student between classes. If the time between classes is several months, mail the envelopes a couple of weeks after the class.]

**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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**References:**

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**Lesson Plan 6: Grooming—Recognizing risky adult behavior—Teacher Planning and Preparation**

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**Getting started with Lessons 6:**

**Principle:** Identifying grooming behaviors of potential abusers. Specifically:

- 1) Adults that give gifts without permission and tell young people not to tell anyone about the gift or where they got it, and
- 2) Knowing when to refuse to go with an adult somewhere or 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 young people in recognizing the risky and/or scary behaviors that adults exhibit and teach young people how to trust their own instincts and resist the overtures of a potential molester.

**Learning Goals:** To give young people the ability to begin to identify and define adult behaviors that indicate that the person wants more than friendship in the relationship and to empower the young people to trust their own instincts about what is “okay” and what is “not okay.” The goal for this age group 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:

- That young people can 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.
- To empower young people to 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 or someone they have known for a long time.
- 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.
- They can speak up and tell a trusted adult when someone’s behavior makes them feel uncomfortable or uneasy.

**Dealing with the pre-adolescent age: “Transition” is the key concept**

The junior high school child is experiencing a period of rapid growth. The emergence of interest in the opposite sex is occurring. These young people are concerned about physical change, body size, skin, and hair length. Concepts depend a great deal on body image as young people complain of being either too physically mature or too physically immature. Peer groups play an important role in the shaping of attitudes and interests. Caregivers need to regularly assure youngsters that changes are normal, though the rate of change varies from person to person.

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Parents, catechists, teachers, youth ministers, and other caring adults must also listen to children and observe what is occurring with them. Let young people be themselves. Let them explore their self-expression—but know who they are with, what they are doing, and remind them of the importance of protecting themselves during this time in life. During this time, children are completely self-absorbed and many are naturally less communicative.

**Vocabulary words:**

- Uncomfortable — Experiencing physical discomfort that leaves one ill at ease or uneasy, sometimes causing anxiety.
- Confusing — To cause to be unable to think clearly, to make unclear or incomprehensible.<sup>1</sup>
- Secrets — Something that is hidden from others or that is known only to one or to a few.<sup>2</sup>
- Secluded — Kept apart from social contact with other people, hidden from view.<sup>3</sup>

**Supplies:**

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 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 final 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.

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<sup>1</sup> WordNet ® 2.0, © 2003 Princeton University

<sup>2</sup> The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

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- 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.

**Activity 2: When to go and when to say “no.”**

**Directions:** [NOTE TO TEACHER: Review the Supplemental Teacher Preparation material in Lesson #5 and the points made in the lesson. Remind the students that these lessons are designed to give them the tools to protect themselves when difficult or even dangerous situations arise. Review their right and responsibility to tell someone if anyone—adult or young person—does something that leaves them feeling bad, uncomfortable, scary, or confused. Acknowledge that it may be difficult to talk about these situations but remind the students that one of the important reasons to tell a trusted adult when something odd happens is that although the student may be safe from harm, others may be vulnerable also. Telling a trusted adult can help protect others.]

Remind them that knowing what to do when someone intrudes upon their boundaries or violates the touching rules can mean the difference between safety and harm and that one of the key elements of the touching rules is that you **MUST** tell a trusted adult when someone violates the rules.

The purpose of this conversation is to begin to expand the discussion about the touching rules to the grooming process. It is important to empower young people to put a stop to activities that place them in harm's way before there is an opportunity for the harm to occur. One of the ways they can protect themselves is to think before they act or, more accurately, think of the possible risks before they go somewhere with someone and put themselves in a dangerous or risky situation.]

**TEACHER: “In our discussions last year we talked about your right to speak up and tell a trusted adult when someone harms you or touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable. We also talked about how to recognize a trusted adult.”**

**“In today’s discussion we will review some of that material, but our primary focus is going to be on establishing some guidelines for you that are more likely to protect you from finding yourself in a compromising, risky or even dangerous situation.”**

**“What if someone you think has earned your trust invites you to go somewhere or asks you to do something that makes you feel uneasy or uncomfortable?”**

**Points to make:**

- If the choice is between trusting your instincts and trusting another person—**TRUST YOUR OWN INSTINCTS.**
- The criteria for trustworthy adults and others are:

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- They do nothing that scares, confuses or hurts you without a good reason (i.e. a nurse gives a shot or a dentist repairing a problem tooth).
- They honor your boundaries and the rules set by your parents.
- Trustworthy adults are people that listen to you and treat you with respect. They are people that respect the wishes and limits set by your parents or guardians. Trustworthy adults would not ask you to do something that makes you feel uneasy or that could put you at odds with your moral values, your principles, or your parents.
- Ask yourself whether this person has your best interests at heart. If you are not completely convinced about this and totally comfortable with the request or the invitation, say “no thanks.”

**“How will you handle a situation like this? What will you say? What will you do? Who will you tell—if anyone?”**

**Points to make:**

- Remember that you have the right to say “no” and that anyone who does not respect that right is not really a friend.
- If you don't feel you can decline to go, invite other young people or adults to go with you. Make sure that you are not in a position of being alone in a secluded area with an adult who invited you there or insisted that you go there.
- If you are leaving the area with this person, tell everyone you see. Let them know where you are going and who you are with.
- If there are no others around, call someone on your cell phone and let them know what's happening.
- Remember that if the person has no ulterior or harmful motives or bad intentions, they will not be upset by your desire to let people know what is happening or to invite others to join you.
- If you don't feel comfortable, there is no reason that the adult can give that should override your own discomfort about the situation. Trust yourself.

**Activity #3: Leading the Way**

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** This project is an opportunity for the Junior High kids to provide something for younger students. Talk with the middle school classroom teacher and the responsible administrator to make sure that there is a time and place for the Junior High students to actually present the program.

**TEACHER:** “One of the ways that we can make a difference is to encourage the young children in our environment to take steps to protect themselves from harmful situations, in order to help us realize the importance of these principles and guidelines—particularly the part about trusting your own instincts. Reinforce to them what to do if something just doesn't feel right or they get a funny feeling in their stomach about something an adult asks them to do or a place the adult asks them to go.”



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We are going to create a skit or two that demonstrate to the young members of our faith community (elementary or middle school classes) how to deal with this kind of situation and empower them to trust their own instincts when something just does not feel right.”

[NOTE: If there are more than eight young people in the class, divide them into two groups and let them create two skits that deal with two different situations.]

**Prayer to end the lesson:**

*(Since this prayer was handed out in the last session and the students took it home, have those who don't have their copy read it off the poster this week as you pray together.)*

*(Remember that this 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.

**References:**

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