

Fourth Grade: Lesson 15

How God Helps Us to Make Good Decisions

Lesson Objective:

These outcomes help children understand that a disciple of Christ needs a well-formed conscience in order to make good life decisions. Children can be reminded of the importance of regular participation in the sacrament of Reconciliation when they have behaved in a way that is contrary to their conscience.

Learning Outcomes:

- Define and explain intellect and free will (CCC 1703-1706).
- Define conscience (CCC Glossary: Conscience).
- Discuss the formation of conscience with guidance from Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church.
- Develop the practice of examination of conscience (CCC Glossary: Examination of Conscience). Personal examination of conscience based on the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes, as inspiration to live a virtuous life.
- Discuss the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist as an important part of conversion and growth in discipleship (CCC 1422-1423, 1427, 1429).

Materials Needed:

- Prayer space items, Bible, pencils
- Copies: Act of Contrition, Broken Hearts activity, word search

As Students Enter Class:

- Consider having the following word search available for students to work on while waiting for others to arrive.
- [Conscience Word Search](#)
- Please note you will want to correct the spelling of temptation by changing the o to the letter p.

Conscience

Q B L N S V J S R N J E S U S S K E O Z I Q S A
V J W O T L L J V S X C I L J M D D P F K D L K M
J Q C M Q L Y N M W L A R Y B Q R U U W K T G N
L W L E E B C W B P I P R G K A C B E M B E V O
Q U C R H Z R P I N F U L J Y Y Z K T P X M X X
D X L V Y P G K E K Y Q E X A M I N A T I O N D
A M D I W X U V F G R T A G R E J J D Z J Z V U
E R O R E X P L M R Z Z D P O E R M J G Y H R L
U R X U B J J G N N O I S S I A M O C L U F K O
I Z V O Y R D O O X O I U X K L C C D S U N W J
I Z F O R G I V E N E S S T U E E J M O O A U C
T Q B J B S U A D B K J G H Q A V M Q I G V C A
H N V M S B P P T I G Q X A O O J D N Y K N A L
H A K I M J G P T O J F E C E H I U Z E R Y S Q
R W M Y P H R R H A U V L B D A M S B E L R G W
R O A G Y S V O U K Q E I Q K A N J X L I X M Q T
Y K Z K F W R M W M W G W Q O S I N L T O E D H
X A H Z X Z K O P Q L H Z C O O M I W A Y
G N O T T A T O M E T A D J N J F G T W R R Q F
E C N E I C S N O C Y Z T S Z Y R A W W R T V H
T G E Q B T Z H J X S S Q L W L W L W C F E
D D Z H B F X W P P D S A R U X H R F P S O H Q
T N Y X Q G B U F H N W I F R E E W I L L G U P
Z C T O X K U K Z O Y W M G I Y C M B R K X Q B

God commission mortal free will
forgiveness Jesus sin temptation
omission venial communion home
welcome examination conscience

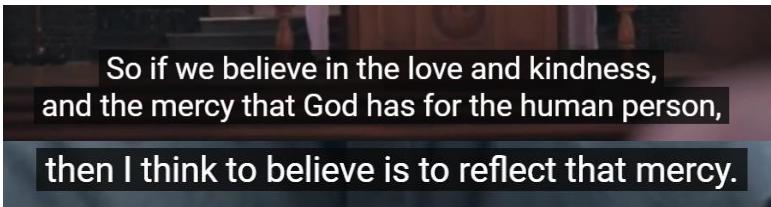
Beginning of Class:

- Invite students to your prayer space and pray the Our Father.
- Ask students the following: What do you think we are discussing today in class, based on the word search?

Lesson Order	Implementation Ideas
Lesson 15 Video	<p>This video is 1:45 in length.</p> <p>Highlights: We have been studying how to make good and holy decisions so that our actions lead us to be virtuous. Last week, we talked about mortal and venial sins, and how the 10 Commandments and Beatitudes can guide us to live well.</p> <p>God has given us free will and intellect, which means we can choose to do good or evil, and we can think and make choices. Our conscience, which is deep within each of us, can help us make good choices. It is often referred to as natural law. We are wired for doing good things! Natural law guides our heart to do good, avoid evil, and know right from wrong.</p> <p>However, we have to nurture or nourish our conscience in order to grow in holiness.</p> <p>STOP AND DISCUSS: What are some ways we can nourish our conscience? (Reading the Bible, going to confession, following the teachings of the Church, etc...)</p> <p>Let's finish the video and see if your answers are also in the video!</p> <p>QUESTION: Why do you think God gave us free will and the ability to make our own choices?</p>
Living the Christian Life: Faith and Actions	<p>This video is 2:02 in length. It is narrated by a priest.</p> <p>Highlights: St. James tells us that any faith without action is dead. If we believe in God, that He is love, gave His son for our sake, who sacrificed so much, HOW CAN WE LIVE WITHOUT SACRIFICING FOR EACH OTHER?</p>

STOP THE VIDEO AND ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO THINK DEEPLY ABOUT THIS QUESTION AND THEN SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS.

Back to Video:



We must also be willing to sacrifice and consider the happiness of others as equally important as our own happiness.

In that sense, faith without works is dead, because it's just an abstract faith in notions about God, but doesn't spring into action.

We don't have to save everyone; Jesus already did that. We don't have to feed everyone. But we must ask ourselves, how can I help the person next to me or others I meet in my life?

If all of us who are members of the Catholic Church, make these little differences, imagine the positive impact this would have on the world?

STOP AND DISCUSS: Such wonderful thoughts in this video; please give students time to reflect and share their thoughts. How can they, a 4th grade boy or girl, make a positive difference?

Natural Law Theory

Please note: this video is a bit above the fourth-grade level; feel free to stop and discuss as you see the need. I screen

This video is 9:39 in length.

Highlights:

Thomas Aquinas pondered: How could people follow God's moral rules and divine commands,

snipped the main points hoping it will help you field questions by quickly finding the answers.

if they didn't even know about the guy who made the commandments?

Natural Law Theory: God made us pre-loaded with the tools we need to know what's good. God is awesome. Since God made you, you must also be awesome. BUT, don't forget to be awesome!

AQUINAS ARGUED THAT GOD CREATED THE WORLD ACCORDING TO NATURAL LAWS – PREDICTABLE, GOAL-DRIVEN SYSTEMS WHEREBY LIFE IS SUSTAINED, AND EVERYTHING FUNCTIONS SMOOTHLY.

As part of this natural order, God made things that are good for us, such as sunlight, water, trees, plants, etc...

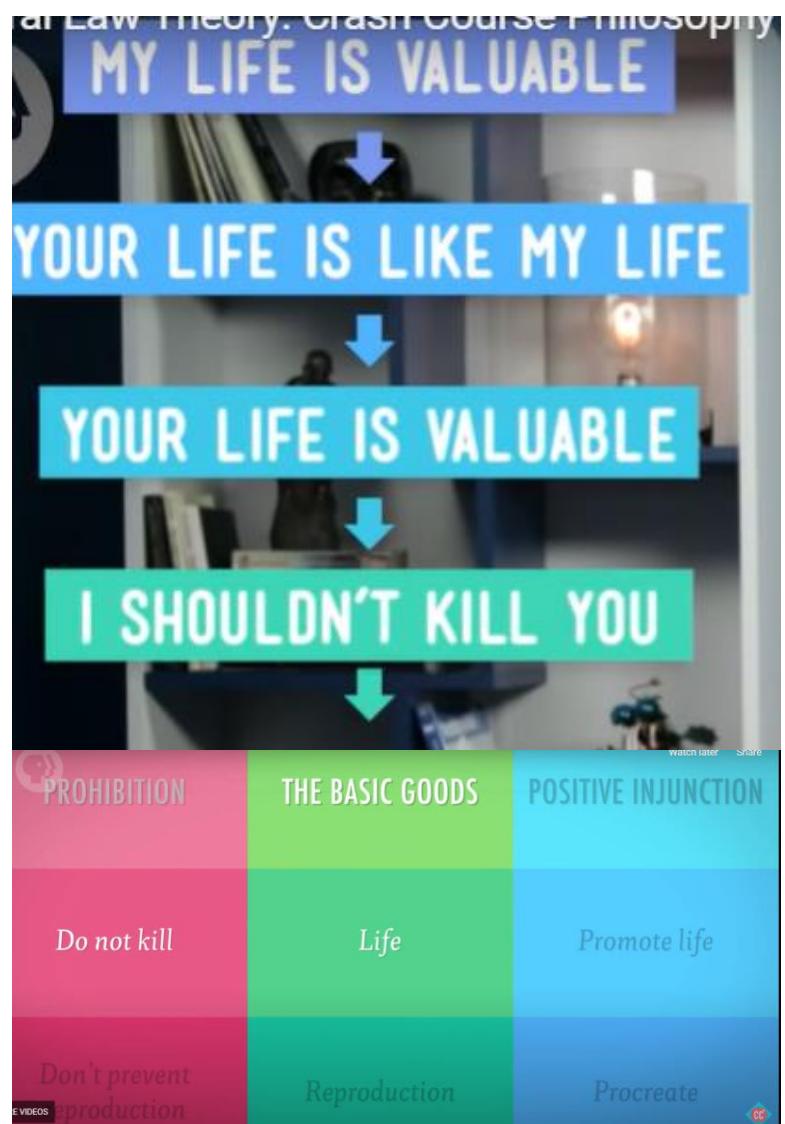
We are made to seek or need the basic goods. There are 7 of them.

- Life –Survival Instinct
- Reproduction
- Educate One's Own Offspring
- Seek God
- Live in Society
- Avoid Offense
- Shun ignorance – inquisitive, want to learn

WHILE SHORT PERIODS OF SOLITUDE CAN BE GOOD, HE BELIEVED THAT WE'RE BASICALLY PACK ANIMALS, AND OUR DESIRE FOR LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE, AND OUR SUSCEPTIBILITY TO PEER PRESSURE, ARE ALL EVIDENCE OF THIS.

INSTEAD, OUR INSTINCT SHOWS US THE BASIC GOODS, AND REASON ALLOWS US TO DERIVE THE NATURAL LAW FROM THEM.

EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS WORKS:



IF GOD CREATED US TO SEEK THE GOOD,
AND IF WE'RE BUILT WITH THE ABILITY TO
RECOGNIZE AND SEEK IT, THEN WHY DO PEOPLE
VIOLATE THE NATURAL LAW ALL THE TIME?!

AQUINAS HAD TWO EXPLANATIONS FOR THIS:

SOMETIMES, WE SEEK WHAT WE
THINK IS GOOD, BUT WE'RE WRONG,
BECAUSE WE'RE JUST IGNORANT.

WE SEE WHAT WE SHOULD DO, BUT EMOTION
OVERPOWERS OUR REASON, AND WE FAIL TO
DO THE THINGS WE KNOW WE SHOULD.

At 7:12, the video moves into critiques of Natural Law theory. You may choose to stop the video here, since this material is quite dense and somewhat challenging for fourth grade students.

An Examination of Conscience Meditation and Handout

This video is 4:35 in length.

A beautiful song plays while examination of conscience questions appear on the screen. Students or catechist will need to read the questions out loud.

A few ideas for incorporating this into your class:

- Play it through once, without stopping.
- Then play it through again, encouraging students to write in their journals some of the sins they would like to confess during their next confession.
- Play it through once, then pass out the Examination of Conscience handout, quietly reading those prompts out loud to the children. Students can underline or

	<p>highlight the areas/sins they would like to confess and improve upon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to keep this Examination of Conscience for the next time they go to confession. <p>ASK: How does participating in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist help us become stronger disciples of Christ?</p> <p>How does participating in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist help us to nourish or nurture our conscience?</p> <p>Why is it important to nourish our consciences? (This was asked earlier but bears repeating).</p>
Act of Contrition – you can also do this at the end of class for your closing prayer.	Pray this all together. You can send this home or keep it in class for future use. Or make enough copies and do both. 😊
Broken Hearts Activity	<p>A few ways to facilitate this activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give one to each student and have them complete their own. • Pair up students and each do 2 or 3 (depending on the number of students in your class) and then share with the class when everyone is done. • Each individual student receives one heart and then everyone share when done.
Closing Prayer	Pray the Act of Contrition all together.