

8th Grade Homestudy Lesson #13

Virtue and Sin

GOAL

The goal of this lesson is for you to come to a greater understanding of what virtue is and what sin is. You will also learn what it looks like to live a life of virtue and why you should want to live a life of virtue rather than a life of sin.

MAIN IDEAS

- All of us are called to live lives of virtue which is “a habitual and firm disposition to do the good.” Someone who lives a virtuous life performs good acts and gives the best of him or herself. A virtuous person tends towards what is good, chooses what is good, and does good things through concrete actions. (CCC 1803)
- Sin is an offense against reason and truth. It goes against our very creation and is a failure to love God and our neighbors. It stems from unhealthy attachment to certain goods and it wounds the nature of a person and the community he or she lives in. (CCC 1849)
- It is up to us to choose whether to live a virtuous or a sinful life. It is up to us, with the help of the Church, to form our consciences and to learn what is right and wrong in the moral life.

TEACHING VIRTUES

Begin by reading Philippians 4:8

All of us are called to live lives of virtue. “A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good.” Someone who lives a virtuous life performs good acts and gives the best of him or herself. A virtuous person tends towards what is good, chooses what is good, and does good things through concrete actions. (CCC 1803) Most people are not born perfectly virtuous; it is something we all have to work at. One type of virtue is human virtue which helps us to govern our actions and emotions and guides us toward living Christian lives.

There are four human virtues that play a pivotal role in the Christian life and they are called the cardinal virtues. All other human virtues are grouped around them and praised in various names throughout the Scriptures. The cardinal virtues are:

Prudence - allows us to judge correctly what is right and what is wrong in any given situation.

Justice - is the constant and permanent determination to give everyone his or her rightful due.

Fortitude - allows us to overcome fear and to remain steady in our will in the face of obstacles, but it is always reasoned and reasonable; the person exercising fortitude does not seek danger for

danger's sake. Prudence and justice are the virtues through which we decide what needs to be done; fortitude gives us the strength to do it.

Temperance - temperance is the restraint of our desires or passions.

But there is even more at our disposal to help us live virtuous lives and to choose to do the good. There are even higher virtues given to us directly from God and infused by God into our souls. These virtues help us to live our lives like children of God and to live lives worthy of eternal life. **These are called the theological virtues.** They are not something we obtain by our own effort, but they are given to us directly as gifts from God. (CCC 1812-813) The first theological virtue is faith. Faith helps us to believe in God and all that he has said and revealed to us. It helps us also to share our faith with others. (CCC 1814-1816) Next, we have hope. Hope is the virtue by which we desire heaven and see it as the greatest good and the fulfillment of all our desires. It sustains us during difficult times and helps us to purify our lives so that we can make it to heaven. (CCC 1817 - 1821) Finally, there is charity. This is also known as love. It is the greatest virtue which allows us to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves out of that love for God. Love binds together all the other virtues. (CCC 1822-1829)

Pause and Read John 10:10

SIN

There is a constant and very real battle in our lives between following the way of the thief who kills and destroys and following the Good Shepherd to abundant life. It is the difference between choosing sin or virtue. But sin can be confusing, it can be alluring, and it is oftentimes filled with a lot of false promises. Sin is an offense against reason and truth. It goes against our very creation and is a failure to love God and our neighbors. It stems from unhealthy attachment to certain goods, and it wounds the nature of man and the community he lives in. (CCC 1849)

Not all sin is the same in severity; there are two categories of sin. **Mortal sin is the worst sin and is comparable to turning our backs, completely, on God.** It results in a loss of charity and a rejection of sanctifying grace which puts us outside of a state of grace. If someone dies not in a state of grace - because he has severed his relationship with God — he is likely to go to hell. (CCC 1854 - 1860, CCC 1999-2002) In order for a sin to be a mortal sin it must be of grave matter. **Grave matter is something that goes directly against the commandments of God such as murder, abortion, cheating on your spouse, stealing, or pre-marital sex.** Also for it to be a mortal sin the person must be fully aware that what he or she is doing is wrong. **That means that in the midst of doing something or making a choice you know completely and totally that it is wrong.** Finally a mortal sin must be done with free consent. **Free consent means a person is freely choosing to commit that sin.** For example you absolutely know that something is bad but you choose to do it anyway, no one is forcing you to do it. (CCC 1856-1861)

Venial sin is the second type of sin and it is less severe. It weakens charity within us and weakens our relationship with God but it does not cut it off completely. We should still confess these sins and seek to overcome them because “deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin.” (CCC 1862- 1864)

Sin clouds our judgment and makes it hard for us to make the right decisions. It tends to build up on itself and grow stronger the longer we let it run our lives. But at the end of the day it cannot destroy our innate sense of right and wrong. (CCC 1865) Sin affects everyone, not just us. And we can be responsible for the sins of others if we participate in their sin by encouraging them or not discouraging them when we know that they are doing something wrong, or if we protect evildoers. (CCC 1865- 1869)

MERCY

There are a lot of things constantly at play in our lives either encouraging us to build up or to destroy different things in our lives. The good news is that we have the choice. We have complete control over what kind of lives we live and which way we decide to go — the way of destroyers or builders. As we learn more and more about how to make the right decisions in our lives, it is not just something that stays here. It is not some school lesson to remember for a test and then forget. This is about our life; this is about our eternal salvation. It is up to us to choose whether to live a virtuous life or a sinful life. It is up to us, with the help of the Church, to form our conscience and begin to learn what is right and wrong in the moral life. God gives us so much to help fight the war with evil, to live good lives, and to have abundance and joy. And He even gives us His great mercy, love, and forgiveness when we do fall into sin. Sin is tricky, and our choices can be clouded. We are all sinners and we all fall short of the glory of God. But even in this midst of this reality God gives us the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Pause and read Romans 3:23

Through this sacrament (confession) God forgives us of all our sins and gives us the strength to carry on and to overcome particular sin in our lives! God’s mercy is never ending. He will always forgive our sin if we come to Him sorrowful and seeking repentance. God wants to give us freedom, but again it is our choice; it is up to us to come to Him and admit that what we did was wrong. (CCC 1846-1848)

QUESTIONS

1. After today’s lesson, how do you now understand virtue?

2. What are the four cardinal virtues? What are the three theological virtues?

3. Why is it important to develop virtue in your life?

4. What is sin?

5. What is the difference between mortal and venial sin?

6. What is mercy and why is it important?

SEND

An Examination of Conscience for Teens

Complete the following examination of conscience and pray the Act of Contrition. If you are able, attend the sacrament of confession. **Please do not return the examination of conscience as this is personal to you!**

1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before me.

(The First Commandment teaches us to put God first in our lives)

How do I spend my time each day?

Do I remember that God loves me?

Do I remember to give thanks to God for all that I have received?

Do I have my priorities in order?

Do I pray?

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

(The second commandment teaches us to speak carefully, to respect the power of our words, and to say only what we mean to say.)

Do I pay attention to the way my words affect others?

Do I misuse God's name to express anger or frustration?

Do I say hurtful things to others when I am angry or upset?

Do I put down other people?

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

(The third commandment teaches us to take time to worship God regularly and frequently.)

Do I take time each week to pray and to worship God?

Do I take part in Mass on a regular basis, at least every Sunday?

Do I remember that my strength comes from God, and that without God I can do nothing?

Do I take time to relax and appreciate all that God has given me?

Do I make time to get to know my family and my friends better?

4. Honor your father and your mother

(The fourth commandment teaches us to appreciate our parents)

Am I loving, respectful, and obedient to my parents, and for all who take care of me?

Am I too critical of my parents?

Do I offer to help around the house?

5. You shall not kill.

(The fifth commandment teaches us to appreciate life)

Do I value all people?

Do I experiment with alcohol or drugs and show no regard to their effect on my grades, my self respect or my relationships?

Do I take good care of myself?

Have I ever physically hurt anyone?

6. You shall not commit adultery

(The sixth commandment teaches us to keep our promises, and to protect our sexuality)

Do I value and respect my sexuality?

Do I try to develop healthy relationships and avoid relationships where people are treated like things?

Do I dishonor my body through impure actions?

Do I respect the relationship God has set up between sexual intimacy and marriage?

7. You shall not steal

(The seventh commandment teaches us to respect private property and the rights of others)

Do I take things that don't belong to me?

Do I respect public property and the property of other people?

Do I take more than I need?

Do I share generously?

Do I cheat on test or homework?

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

(The eighth commandment teaches us to speak the truth and never to say more than is necessary)

Am I a truthful person?

Have I damaged the reputation of another person by exaggerating or making up stories about them?

Do I say things just to hurt other people?

Do I lie to protect, stay out of trouble or to avoid a difficult situation, even if someone will be hurt?

9. You shall not covet your neighbor's partner

(The ninth commandment teaches us to avoid inappropriate relationships)

Do I remember that all people are created in the image of God?

Am I envious of others?

Do I resent their popularity or success?

Do I feel I have to put others down in order to feel better about myself?

10. You shall not covet your neighbor's things.

(The tenth commandment teaches us to find happiness where we are)

Do I let greed or envy take over my thoughts?

Do I try to prove I am better than others by bragging or buying more things?

Do I think my own wants are more important than other people's?

Do I remember that it is who I am, not what I own, that is really important?

Lord, help us to examine our lives honestly. Help us to see the things that keep us from being the people you created us to be, and give us the desire and the courage to change.

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am sorry for my sins because I have offended you. I know I should love you above all things. Help me to do penance, to do better, and to avoid anything that might lead me to sin.

Amen.