

St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows
5271 Clinton Street, Elma, NY 14059
Jean Czerniak, Director
(716) 668-4017

Home Study Lesson 9

Morality

GOAL

The goal of this Edge Night is for the youth to understand that they have free will to make choices in life and that these choices determine where they go in their lives - good or bad.

TEACHING

LIFE TO THE FULL

Read CCC 1691

You “have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the kingdom of God” (CCC 1691). All of us are called to live lives worthy of Christ, doing all that He taught us to as revealed to us in Scripture and in the Tradition of the Church. We are called to walk in the love of Christ and to share it with others. (CCC 1691-1694) To us, this may not be a surprise. In fact, it is probably something you’ve heard time and time again. But we are going to talk about the practical’s of what that looks like - to walk in love and to live a life worthy of the Gospel. We will be looking at this in our day to day life in light of morality.

What do you think of when you hear the word morality?

When most people think of morality, they think of a list of dos and don’ts. For many of us, morality has been reduced to nothing more than a set of rules. But, in reality, it is more about what Jesus wants for us rather than what He wants from us. We all have to chose which path of life we will follow. A path that is moral and follows Christ or a path that delights in sin and selfishness and that leads us away

from God. We have the choice to make and not only does it affect our life now, in ways we may or may not see, but it also affects our eternal salvation. (CCC 1695-1698)

To best understand where the idea of morality comes from, we have to go back to the beginning. God created us in His image and likeness and gave us dignity as human persons. (Genesis 1:26-28, CCC 1701 - 1708) Although He could have created us like robots who followed all of His commandments without a question or choice, He created us with free will. Because of free will we have the freedom to choose to follow God's commandments, and we have the freedom to choose to love Him and be in relationship with Him. We shape our lives by our free will. (CCC 1730-1732)

But, ever since the Fall, choosing good has become harder. Because of our fallen nature, we have a natural inclination to sin known as concupiscence. Because of original sin and our inclination to sin, we often make the wrong choices in our daily lives. When we make wrong choices, it causes us to abuse our freedom and become bound to life of sin. But, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we find freedom from sin and the ability to make good choices in our lives. Jesus shows us how and gives us the grace to make right choices. (CCC 1739 - 1741)

Read John 10:10

Everything that Jesus does and says is to lead us to ultimate happiness and fullness of life. When Jesus give us commands to follow it is because He knows that it will lead us to true happiness. (John 14:15)

MORAL DECISION MAKING

What are some rules you have around your house that protect you from harm? (For example: the rule to not eat sugary snacks and candy all day is in place to keep you from getting sick.) The same goes for the rules that God makes for us. He loves us more than we could ever imagine, therefore He give us boundaries and rules to keep us safe from harm.

Read Deuteronomy 30:11

God clearly tells us that are two paths we can choose: life or death. It's easy to look at our choices in middle school and think that they do not affect our future

that much. The reality is that not only do the choices we make now affect our future on earth, but also when we die, whether today or 50 years from now, our choices now also affect where we spend eternity. (CCC 1695-1698)

So, how do we evaluate our actions? How do we know if we are making the right decisions? We can use our reason to determine whether our choices are good or bad. We can do so by looking at the three different parts that make up a choice: the object, the intention, and the circumstance. (CCC 1750)

The object is the thing that you are choosing, the matter of your actions. For example, stealing and gossiping would be objects that are bad. While forgiving your siblings and doing your chores would be morally good objects. (CCC 1751) The Ten Commandments can be a good guide in knowing what are always bad objects such as stealing, lying, or murder. (CCC 1756)

The intention is the “why” behind your choice or action. You can figure out the intention by asking yourself what is motivating you to make the decision and what is your desired outcome. (CCC 1752) Even if you choose something good, such as forgiving your siblings, that action can be made less good by a bad intention, such as doing it to manipulate your parents into letting you go out with your friends when you really didn’t mean what you said to your siblings. Bad intentions can make our decisions bad even if the end is good. (CCC 1752)

The circumstance is the details that help paint the picture of the scenario. It tells us who was involved, where it takes place, and any other factors that might help us understand why a certain choice might be made. (CCC 1754) Although the circumstance cannot change the moral quality of an action, sometimes it can change our culpability, or responsibility, for a certain action. For example, fear can cause us to make decisions that we wouldn’t normally make.

For an action to be considered morally correct, the object, intention, and circumstance must all be good. (CCC 1755) If man chooses something good to do but achieves it by doing something evil that action is not good: “the end does not justify the means” and “one may not do evil so that good may result from it.” (CCC 1753, 1756)

PASSIONS AND EMOTIONS

There are other factors that influence our ability to make good choices in our lives. The first is what we would call passions, or feelings, and emotions. Sometimes our reason is affected by our current mood. In themselves, passions are not morally evil or good — they are neutral. But they are considered good when they lead us to do good things and they can be considered bad when they lead us to make bad decisions. (CCC 1767) Because emotions can sometimes cloud our decision making, it is important to form our conscience. Our conscience is that little voice inside of us that helps us recognize what is good and what is evil. Our conscience helps us make good decisions. It is up to us to listen to our conscience in the various decisions that we have to make. It is also important that we form our conscience to know what is good and what is bad so that when we listen to it we are making the right choices. (CCC 1777-1778)

When we use our freedom to choose the good, we actually become more free because we are becoming who we were created to be. “The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to ‘the slavery of sin.’” (CCC 1733)

Saint John Paul II said, “Our freedom consists not in doing what we want, but in doing what we ought.” When we use our freedom to choose the good, we actually become more free. When we choose the good, it gives us life because we were created for good. (CCC 1733) Look at the lives of the saints. These were people who understood that choosing to listen to the words of Christ and following what He teaches will bring the ultimate satisfaction and fulfillment to their lives. They understood that choosing to do the right thing in all situations means choosing to live lives that are full of happiness and joy. You have the freedom to choose to follow Jesus in your words in actions or to not. (CCC 1695-1698)

QUESTIONS:

1. How do you understand morality?
2. How does morality relate to our God-given free will?
3. How do we evaluate our actions? How do we know if we are making the right decisions?

4. How does morality correspond to our discussion on the Ten Commandments?

5. How can prayer, as well as morality, help us with making right decisions?