



Growing with GOD™
Safe and Sacred

LESSON 5
Digital Discipleship

In This Lesson

For You **Pages 1–2**

- A Mindful Online Presence
- 3-Minute Retreat
- Lead Your Child to Grow with God
- Safe and Sacred at Home

For You and Your Child **Pages 3–4**

- With Your Child: Bringing the Lesson Home
- Pray Together



What the Church Says About

*Staying Connected
with Others*

Human beings were created not to live solitary lives, but to live in communion with God and with one another, a communion that is both life-giving and loving.

U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Marriage (2009)

A Mindful Online Presence

Developing more complex relationships can be difficult. Fifth-grade friendships are full of admiration, fun experiences, and shared heartaches. At times, they may be peppered with envy and judgment. Add in the internet and online friendships, and things get even more tricky to navigate.

It is up to parents to see that developing an online presence is done in a mindful and responsible way—by considering the example of Jesus and applying it in an online environment.



All too often, the false feeling of anonymity one experiences during online activity is problematic. Even the most responsible children need firm, gentle guidance when it comes to developing a positive online presence.

Encourage your child to reflect the light of Jesus in daily interactions, and remind him or her to do the same online. Then establish rules about which websites are safe for your child to visit, screen time limits, what activities need direct supervision, and boundaries regarding texting or playing games. Discuss what type of information should never be shared online.

Apps and social media platforms can enrich our lives and friendships when we use them mindfully and with the purpose of living in communion with others. The internet can be a powerful tool to share the love of God with others, even those within our family.



3 minute
RETREAT

*“I have called you friends,
because I have told you
everything I have heard
from my Father.”*

John 15:15

Reflection

We are called to reflect the love of Jesus toward all people we encounter in our daily lives, whether we see them face-to-face or communicate with them online. By showing genuine concern for others, listening to their ideas, and praying for their well-being, we live in communion with them as God intended. When we follow the example of Jesus, we honor his sacrifice for us, and participate in furthering the common good of all God’s children.

Questions

Who in my life seems lost or lonely and in great need of being shown God’s love? How can I follow more closely the example of Jesus in my daily life?



Prayer

Speak to Jesus, using the words of this prayer or your own.

Jesus my friend, help me become more aware every day of the opportunities to be a true friend with others.

Lead Your Child to Grow with God: Spiritually, Socially, and Physically

Spiritual Pray together and thank God for the strength and richness of your family and for the blessings your family has received in times of joy and hardship. Tell stories about your parents and grandparents. This can help children feel grounded and connected to a family story that is large and significant. You may wish to research your family history online. If delving into family history is not helpful, talk with your child about what you believe may be in God’s plan for the future of your family, and invite your child to share his or her ideas about the future and his or her place in it.

Social When we watch movies and read stories together, we can take those opportunities to talk about characters and their feelings. This is an excellent way to help children develop the ability to reflect on the feelings of others and show concern for them. Include a conversation about how this affects online interactions.



Physical Place limits on screen time and encourage your child to be as active as possible. Outdoor play is essential for the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of all children, and they often love it when their parents play with them. Schedule family outings to a local park, take a picnic, and play some games.

Instigate and participate in family fun to form a strong bond with your child.

Safe and Sacred at Home



Positively Catholic (Loyola Press)
by Michael Leach

Pope John Paul II compared God’s love to [a mother’s love]:
“tender, merciful, patient, and full of understanding.”

Big Ideas

In Lesson 5, your child will:

- identify the qualities of a friend.
- demonstrate understanding of online safety strategies.
- analyze his or her digital citizenship and online presence.
- define *digital citizen*, *compassion*, *digital footprint*, and *sexting*.

Words to Know

digital citizen · Someone who uses technology appropriately and responsibly, and who acts with respect and compassion online

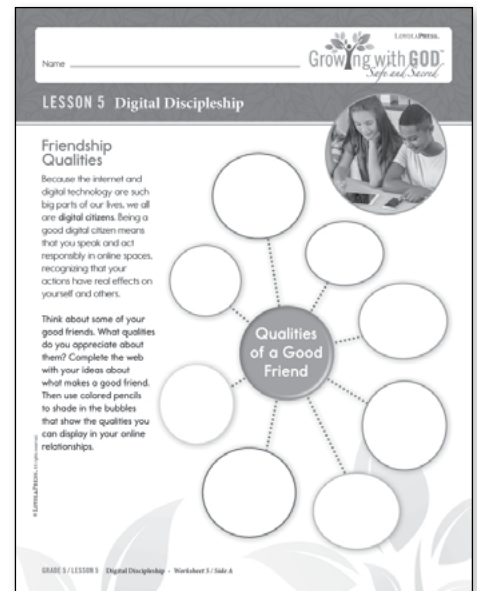
compassion · Kindness and concern for the feelings of others

digital footprint · A record or trail that one leaves behind after visiting a website or engaging in online activities

sexting · The act of sending or receiving nude or partially nude photos by text or other electronic means

Bringing the Lesson Home

Determine ahead of time when and where you and your child will engage with the lesson content. Read or complete Side A of the worksheet with your child.



STEP 1 ENGAGE & EXPLORE

No doubt you have had many conversations with your child about friends. This is a great opportunity to tell your child what you wish for him or her where friendships are concerned and to talk about the pitfalls he or she may face online.



SAY: My hope for you is that you find friends who always shine the love of Jesus into your life, whether you are sitting in the living room together or chatting online with one another. People do not always use good judgment. They may send out wrong or hurtful information through the internet. I want you to know that you can always come to me for help if someone bothers or hurts you somehow online.

Express trust in your child's judgment and give a brief reminder about why there must be rules regarding online activity.

SAY: I want you to know that I trust you to be a mindful and responsible person when you are online. The rules set for you are for your well-being and to keep you safe.

Bringing the Lesson Home *(continued)*

STEP 2 REFLECT & RESPOND

Read or complete Side B of the worksheet with your child.

SAY: Any interaction we have with people, whether online or in person, has an effect. It may be positive, negative, or neutral, but we must not underestimate the power we have to touch another life with what we say and do.

Take some time to imagine what the effect would be if everyone followed the example of Jesus and applied it in an online environment.

SAY: Let's pray together. Pray the prayer from the Pray Together feature or one of your own. Begin and end the prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

Growing with GOD

Leave a Positive Digital Footprint

Read each question and circle your answer. For any questions to which you answer "no," think about what you can do to adjust your behavior and write your idea on the line provided.

1. Does my online presence reflect who I really am without revealing sensitive information about me? yes no

2. Are my online friends posting appropriate materials and comments? yes no

3. Do I keep my password, birthdate, and other identifying information private? yes no

4. Do I visit only sites that I know are appropriate for me? yes no

5. Do I follow family rules about internet use? yes no

6. Do I have appropriate privacy settings on my internet devices? yes no

Scripture
Faithful friends are a family shelter, whoever finds one finds a treasure. — Proverbs 17:1

Prayer
Creator of all things, thank you for giving me the ability to safely and respectfully use the digital tools that connect me to the world. Help me use these tools as you see fit. With your guidance, I pray that I may share the good in the world with everyone I encounter. Amen.

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Pray Together

Dear God, thank you for friends who shine the light of Jesus in our lives. Help us to be mindful of the effect our words and actions have on others. We pray that we may use the digital tools available to us to bring us closer to living in communion with one another.

