



LESSON 5
Digital Discipleship

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What the Church Says About

Self-Image and the Media

Human beings are not the same thing as the images proposed in advertising and shown by the modern mass media. ... They are much more because of their vocation to love, which introduces them as male and female into the realm of the “great mystery.”

Pope John Paul II,
Letter to Families (1994)

Teach Kindness, Compassion, and Safety

Technology can bring us into immediate proximity with people and information that can enrich our understanding, build a sense of community, foster empathy, and promote solidarity. Unfortunately, this proximity can also bring us into contact with that which can threaten our physical and spiritual well-being.

Apply the same, if not more, scrutiny to your child’s online activities as you do to those offline. Consistently redirect inappropriate behavior and look for opportunities to teach lessons of kindness, compassion, and safety. In addition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops suggests the following.

- Model appropriate online behavior.
- Teach children not to share private information or images online.
- Limit use of computers and devices to public spaces in the home.
- Install software that can block or monitor explicit website visits.
- Discuss the websites and apps your child has visited and used.

Encourage your child to share with you the content he or she encounters online—both positive and negative.

Unfortunately, your child may still be exposed to content that is harmful or disturbing. Explain to your child that if someone sends him or her pictures or asks for pictures that are sexual in nature, he or she should not forward the images and should tell you about it immediately. The same is true if your child inadvertently comes across pornography or if someone shows or asks to show your child pornography. If you or your child encounter images that depict the exploitation of minors, report it immediately to law enforcement authorities or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.



3minute
RETREAT

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.

Ephesians 5:8–9

Reflection

The idea of darkness often brings about feelings of fear and uncertainty. In our darkest moments, we can feel isolated, forlorn or frightened, and thoroughly alone. It is no surprise then that Scripture connects the image of light with the Lord. Light represents hope. Christ's love and goodness shine light on our fears and remind us that we are never alone. In Christ's light, we find hope to walk through our difficulties and share goodness, truth, and light with one another.

Questions

During difficult moments, how does God give me grace to live in his light? How can I help my child walk through dark times to find hope in Christ?



Prayer

Pray to Jesus, using this prayer or one of your own.

Christ, you are the Light of the World. Help me to live in goodness and truth and to shine your light of hope on all who need it.

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

Spiritual Display religious images and art in your home as a reminder of the loving presence of Christ. Consider making a prayer space with a Bible, one or more rosaries, and a book of Catholic prayers. Encourage family members to spend a few quiet moments in the space each day to center themselves and pray.

Social Monitor your child's online presence. Talk about positive ways to interact on social media, especially in situations where identities are anonymous. Have ongoing discussions with your child about what to do if he or she encounters negative comments or inappropriate content while online. Regular communication will increase the likelihood that your child will feel comfortable discussing problems should they occur.

Physical Encourage your child to spend time being active outdoors with friends. You might host a gathering at a park, in your backyard, or at a pool and institute a "no devices" policy for all or part of the time children are together. Doing so will encourage children to find other creative ways to entertain themselves.

Safe and Sacred at Home



Walking with Jesus (Loyola Press)
by Pope Francis

St. John, writing to young people, told them: "You are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one" (1 John 2:14). You people who choose Christ are strong: they are fed by his word, and they do not need to "stuff themselves" with other things! Have the courage to swim against the tide. Have the courage to be truly happy! Say no to an ephemeral, superficial, and throwaway culture, a culture that assumes that you are incapable of taking on responsibility and facing the great challenges of life!

Big Ideas

In Lesson 5, your child will:

- discuss ways people interact online.
- identify ways negative social media comments can affect a person.
- describe behaviors that will help him or her develop and maintain a virtuous online presence.
- define *social media*, *digital disciple*, and *pornography*.

Words to Know

social media ·

The websites and software applications (apps) by which people can post content and interact with one another electronically

digital disciple ·

Someone who shares the Good News of Jesus Christ's plan for our salvation in the virtual world

pornography ·

Unhealthy content that is meant to stir up sexual feelings

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.

NAME _____


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Growing with GOD
Safe and Sound

LESSON 5 Digital Discipleship

Social Media Check-up

Social media are websites and apps that allow us to connect with one another online. Each time we interact online, we make a choice about how we behave. We are called to show God's love both online and offline. We can be good digital disciples when we act in responsible ways that show respect for ourselves and others.

Below, read each profile of a young person. Then choose one and answer the questions.



Profile 1
Cecelia posts a picture of herself every day on a popular photo-sharing app. She checks frequently to see the "likes" and comments. If not many people respond, Cecelia deletes the photo.

Profile 2
Raul uses a messaging app to chat with friends. Sometimes he uses inappropriate language. He takes embarrassing photos of classmates at school and then shares them with his friends. He doesn't worry because the photos disappear after they are opened.

Profile 3
Mike has several different social media accounts. He accepts all friend requests, even from people she doesn't know. She allows everyone to view her photos and profile so she can receive lots of comments.

I chose Profile .

Is this person behaving in a healthy way online? Why or why not? If not, what should he or she do instead?

GRADE 6 / LESSON 5 Digital Discipleship - Worksheet 5 / Side A

STEP 1 ENGAGE & EXPLORE

Consider how often you rely on your devices for information and interaction with others. As you talk with your child about the effects of social media, keep in mind that digital influences, such as cell phones, tablets, and computers, have been integrated into almost every part of daily life. You may use this lesson to open a dialogue with your child about developing healthy media habits.



SAY: We might write things online that we would never say to someone in person. Because the person isn't right in front of us, we can't see his or her facial expressions or body language. Guide your child to understand that not getting real-

time, in-person feedback about how someone is responding to us can result in our saying negative or hurtful comments without really experiencing the consequences of them. Share any personal experiences you may have had with such online interactions. Point out that posting negative comments online is no less painful than saying mean things directly to someone.

Use the profiles on Side A of the worksheet to discuss safe and responsible social media usage.

Bringing the Lesson Home *(continued)*

STEP 2 REFLECT & RESPOND

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

SAY: I am so proud of the loving and kind person you are becoming. I know that you will also share that same spirit of care and compassion when you communicate with others online. Use your child's responses from Side B of the worksheet as a springboard for discussion about how to develop a virtuous online presence. Use the blackline master to discuss how your child should respond when he or she sees disturbing or demeaning content on websites, apps, games, or through social media.

SAY: Let's pray together now. Pray the prayer from the Pray Together feature or a prayer of your own. Begin and end the prayer by praying the Sign of the Cross.

Scripture
You will shine like the path in the darkness, holding up your right hand forever. *Psalm 119:105*

Follow Christ
As a digital disciple, you may sometimes be faced with difficult decisions. A friend may post something you know is wrong. Someone may share something that makes you feel uncomfortable. It can be helpful to remember that you are not alone in those moments. You can ask Christ to show you the right path.

Read the following situations. Write a response for each that would help you respond as a follower of Christ.

- A friend sends you a quote to rate which of your friends is coolest.
- A classmate shows you a website with graphic and adult content.
- A mean comment is posted in your group chat about a classmate who isn't part of the chat.
- Someone forwards you and others an embarrassing photo of a classmate.

Prayer
Peace Prayer
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. Amen.

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Pray Together

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your peace. May we be an instrument of your peace by sharing your love in both our online and offline interactions.

