

**Parish Edition**

***Catechist Guide***

saint mary's press



***Catholic  
Connections***  
*for Middle Schoolers*

***Christian Morality  
and Justice***

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***Alan J. Talley***

JUSTICE  
MORALITY

***Christian Morality and Justice***  
***Catechist's Guide***  
***Catholic Connections***



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# INTRODUCTION

## Catholic Connections Program

Welcome to Catholic Connections, a parish religious education program for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders! The program includes six fully developed courses, each with its own catechist guide full of active, hands-on learning sessions:

- God, Revelation, and Faith
- Jesus the Christ
- The Holy Spirit and the Church
- Sacraments and Prayer
- Christian Morality and Justice
- The Eucharist

In each course the participants use a faith handbook called *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers* (Saint Mary's Press, 2009). The handbook is a visually appealing, youth-friendly presentation of the Catholic faith. The six catechist guides and the handbook work together to equip parishes with an excellent resource for fostering the faith of young adolescents.

Fostering the faith of young adolescents involves helping them to make connections between the Catholic faith and everyday life. It also means helping young people to strengthen their connection to the faith community and enter more fully into the life of the community. Catholic Connections aims to strengthen the participants' Catholic identity and inspire them to participate more fully in the Church's mission.

## Tips for Leading Sessions

The Catholic Connections program has been designed to make the catechist's preparation for leading sessions as effective as possible, while providing flexible options requested by many catechists. This section will walk you through planning a typical session, providing you with important background information and tips for using the sessions effectively.

### Session Time Frame

The sessions in this guide have been created to work in periods of 60 to 75 minutes. The sessions' core activities—listed at the beginning of each session, under the “At a Glance” heading—will fill a 60-minute session. If you have more time, consider using the optional 15-minute session extensions. The session outlines include additional discussion questions and media suggestions that can be incorporated to create sessions that go beyond 75 minutes.



## Materials and Preparation

Besides becoming familiar with the session steps and activities, you will need to do some minimal advance preparation for most of the sessions. For example, you may need to gather some supplies, make photocopies of handouts, and do some background reading. This preparation is outlined at the beginning of each session under the heading “Materials and Preparation.”

A few standard supplies are necessary for most sessions. They are listed here so that they do not need to be listed for each individual session:

- a Bible
- copies of *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*, one for each participant
- pens or pencils, one for each participant
- a large blackboard, chalk, and an eraser; or a large whiteboard and markers
- supplies for creating a prayer space, such as a prayer table, a table covering, a Bible and stand, a cross, a candle and matches (if permitted)

## Quick-Start Activities

The first thing you will find as you read the detailed descriptions under the “Session Steps” heading for each session is a quick-start activity. These are simple activities to engage the young people in something fun and intriguing while they wait for the session to start. You may write the instructions on the board or quickly give them verbally as the participants arrive. This frees you to greet the young people as they arrive, recruit volunteers, and so on. In most sessions the quick-start activity is referred to again later in the session.

## Prayer Times

Each session begins and ends with a short prayer time. Young people respond well to ritual, so these prayer times have ritual elements built into them. For example, each opening prayer begins with “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.” (This is a familiar Lasallian prayer of the Christian Brothers, and Saint Mary’s Press is a Lasallian ministry.) Another ritual element is a special prayer space in your meeting area that the young people gather around for the opening and closing prayers. If at all possible, try to create such a space.

The young people should be involved in the prayer times as much as possible. For the closing prayers in most sessions, the participants read together a prayer from the handbook. If they are willing and able, participant volunteers can read the Scripture passages and prayers, even if the instructions do not indicate the need for a participant to read.

All the sessions have a short prayer for the catechist. You may wish to pray this prayer just before the session begins, to center yourself.

## Making the Most of the Activities

The main activities in the sessions use a variety of catechetical techniques to actively engage the young people in their learning. Some young people learn best by reading and answering questions, but many learn more effectively through drama, discussion, physical activity, or even music. Your task in leading these activities is twofold.

First, you must be familiar enough with an activity's details to give clear instructions and to offer needed assistance to the young people as they complete the activity. This is where advance preparation will show its benefit. Consult with your program coordinator or a more experienced catechist if you need help determining how best to lead a particular activity.

Second, you must be able to draw out and clearly summarize the doctrinal points an activity covers. Most activities end with specific "talking points" for you to present. Be sure to cover these! You can enhance your own understanding of the doctrine by reading the handbook chapter or chapters, the paragraphs from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, and the Scripture passages referred to under the "Background Reading" heading.

## Options

As mentioned earlier, each session ends with some optional ideas related to the session: the session extension, additional discussion starters (there are also additional discussion starters in the "Think About It!" sidebars in each handbook chapter), and media suggestions. You can use these to extend the length of a session, to enhance an activity or prayer, or even to replace an activity or prayer.

The Catholic Connections program also has an optional card game called *GAME ON! Games for Catholic Connections* (Saint Mary's Press, 2009), which contains cards with questions that can be used to play several kinds of games with the young people. One question on each card is specifically connected to the content of this course. You can use the card game to introduce or review course doctrine. Consider some of these uses:

- Have the cards out on the table as the young people arrive. They can quiz one another while waiting for the session to start.
- After four or five sessions, plan to leave the last 10 minutes or so of the remaining sessions to hold *GAME ON! Games for Catholic Connections* tournaments.
- Invite parents to attend the final session. Have the young people test their own knowledge by playing one of the card games with (or against!) their parents.

## Course Project

At the end of this guide is a section with detailed information about an optional course project. The aim of the project is to help the participants synthesize what they are learning in the course and make connections between course material and their own lives. A secondary aim is to provide you with a concrete way to involve parents in their children's faith formation, though the project can be accomplished without parents. Please take a look at the project details before the course begins and consider its fit for your group and how you might use it.

## Using *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers Effectively*

A key component of Catholic Connections is *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*. Most of the sessions in this guide are based on one or more chapters of the handbook. At times you will be directed to a particular page in the handbook to have the participants read a short section or look at a particular image. When this happens you will see a snapshot of that handbook page so you know exactly what is being referred to.

But do not limit your use of the handbook to only those instances. The more the participants can use the handbook, the more opportunity they will have to learn content, including content you will not be able to cover completely in the sessions. Consider some of the following possibilities for expanding the young people's use of the handbook:

- Have the handbooks on the tables as the participants arrive, and direct them to look over the appropriate chapter or chapters while waiting for the session to begin.
- Use some of the other images in a particular chapter as a focus point for discussion and to enhance the learning process.
- As part of a session, ask the participants to work in teams to create their own quizzes based on material in the chapter or chapters. Have them use the quizzes they create to challenge one another's understanding.
- Have the young people take the handbook home between sessions and read the chapter or chapters the next session is based on. This creates an opportunity for the parents to see the handbook and be involved with the course.
- Involve parents by sending the handbook home occasionally with a simple assignment the participants are to complete with their parents' help.

## ● Overview of *Christian Morality and Justice* — *Catechist's Guide*

Christian morality is built on God's steadfast call to live in right relationship with God and with others. God has given us the Ten Commandments as a guide for living in right relationship. This course will help the participants to learn about the moral principles embodied in the Ten Commandments. In each core session, the young people will explore one or more of the Ten Commandments as presented in *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*, chapters 32–39. The participants will have opportunities to apply these Christian moral principles to various real-life situations and will be encouraged to use those principles in their own daily lives. They will examine their own experiences and consider many of the moral dilemmas young people often face. In particular, the two life issue sessions apply the Ten Commandments to the important issues of how we use our money and how we use technology.

### Course Themes

#### Core Session: 1. Moral Decision Making

This session helps the participants to consider their own decision-making processes and to learn to use the Cardinal Virtues as tools for making good decisions.

#### Core Session: 2. Honoring God

This session explores God's power and role as Creator. The participants will learn that the First Commandment calls us to honor God for all God's great deeds.

#### Core Session: 3. Honoring Family

This session explores the role parents play in young people's lives and the Fourth Commandment's call to honor our parents.

#### Core Session: 4. Respecting Life

This session explores the presence of God's image in all of us and the Fifth Commandment's call to respect all life.

#### Core Session: 5. Respecting Truth and Property

This session explores the effects that lying and stealing have on relationships. The participants will learn that the Seventh and Eighth Commandments help us to develop trusting relationships.

### **Core Session: 6. Respecting Sexuality**

This session explores the messages from our culture about sexuality and sex. The participants will learn that the Sixth Commandment protects God's true purposes for sex.

### **Core Session: 7. Working for Justice**

This session explores the young people's desire for fairness and how that desire can lead them to answer God's call to do acts of charity and works of justice.

### **Life-Issue Session: 8. Using Money**

This session explores the differences between wants and needs. The participants will learn that God calls us to set priorities and use our money wisely, keeping those differences in mind.

### **Life-Issue Session: 9. Using Technology**

This session explores how using technology involves making moral choices. The participants will learn that God calls us to use technology in ways that develop good relationships with God and others.

### **Concluding Session: 10. Reaching God's Goal for Our Lives**

This session explores how attaining goals involves choices. The participants will understand that we are to make God's goal—of living in right relationship with God and others—our own personal goal as well.

## **Essential Resources**

The following resources for preparation and delivery of the lessons are used throughout the sessions and should be available for frequent reference:

- *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers* (Saint Mary's Press, 2009)
- *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (United States Catholic Conference; also available online at the bishops' Web site)
- a Bible (Be sure it is a Catholic edition. We recommend using either the Good News Translation, which is age-level appropriate, or the New American Bible, which is used for the readings of the *Lectionary*.)

## Strategies for Helping Young People to Pay Attention

*This section is written by John Barone, director of The Monarch Learning Center in Houston, Texas, and author of A Place for All: Ministry for Youth with Special Needs (Saint Mary's Press, 2008).*

### A Million Miles Away

Think back to when you were in school. Did you ever find yourself daydreaming in the classroom? Most of us at one time or another have become lost in thought and disconnected from the action in the classroom. But did you ever *decide* to daydream? Ever say to yourself, “I’m bored with this lesson; I’m going to daydream instead”? Most of us “wake up” from daydreams not remembering how or when we lost touch with our environment.

Have you ever “put your foot in your mouth” by blurting out something you later regretted? Was it ever preceded by, “I think I’ll say something inappropriate now”?

Consider times when you were energetic and had difficulty sitting still. Remember squirming during a lecture, wanting desperately to move? Did you plan to feel this way?

Most of us do not choose to do these things. Yet when young people lose focus, act impulsively, or are hyperactive, we often think they are doing it on purpose.

### Attention Differences

Symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) include distractibility, or difficulty maintaining focus. A participant who is distractible is unable to block out the distractions outside when seated beside a window.

Another symptom is impulsivity. You’ve seen participants who call out answers instead of waiting to be called on. This also includes impulsive actions, like grabbing a pen from another participant or running into the hall without permission.

With Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), hyperactivity is an added symptom. Participants who are hyperactive have high energy levels and need to move. They squirm in their seats, kick their legs, tap their pencils, and sometimes just run around the room.

These symptoms can severely impair learning. And many young people with attention differences also have to cope with a lack of acceptance or support from catechists, parents, and peers. This occurs when symptoms are misinterpreted as willful, when hyperactivity is interpreted as “won’t sit still,” and when distractibility is mistakenly understood as “refuses to pay attention.” Young people who are impulsive are often considered irresponsible or reckless.

This misinterpretation of these symptoms as a matter of choice is unfortunate but not surprising. If a young person in a wheelchair were described as “refuses to walk,” that would be surprising, but because the milder symptoms of ADD and ADHD are shared at times by most people, it is easy to label the behaviors as willful. Throughout the sessions we suggest ways you can help the participants who have difficulty maintaining attention. These suggestions are good for all learners, not just those with attention issues.

### **Around the World with Carlos**

While observing a religious education session, I noticed that Carlos frequently ran to a globe in the back of the room and began spinning it. He grinned as he watched the globe whirl.

“Carlos, where should you be?” The catechist’s tone was respectful. Carlos complied but was soon back at the globe. The catechist sighed and raised her voice: “Carlos! What is your job right now?” He sheepishly returned to his seat.

When Carlos got up for the third time, I respectfully interrupted, and asked Carlos what the catechist wanted.

“For me to pay attention and not spin the globe,” replied Carlos.

“Do you want that?” He nodded yes vigorously. Carlos knew what his catechist wanted, and he seemed to want the same, but thus far was unsuccessful. I gave him a stress ball, with instructions to squeeze the ball instead of spinning the globe. The rest of the group was given the job of observing to see if he was successful at keeping up with them and paying attention to the catechist.

The catechist continued the lesson, which was on the Sermon on the Mount. Carlos’s squeezing was intense. He stayed in his chair but seemed to focus all his attention on the stress ball. He never looked up, seemingly unaware of anything but the ball.

After a few minutes, I asked the group, “Did Carlos stay with everyone?”

They all responded, “Yes.”

“Did he pay attention?”

“Nooooo!”

“Let’s check that out.” I asked Carlos if he was successful at staying with the group.

“Yep.” He smiled, never taking his eye off the ball.

“And were you successful at paying attention?”

“Yep.” He was beaming. “We learned about the Sermon on the Mount, how Jesus taught the Beatitudes, how we’re like salt and light, bringing flavor and God’s love to others, and . . .”

Although he hadn't *looked* focused, Carlos had stayed focused and was able to recount the content of the lesson. The others were asked again if Carlos was successful at paying attention. They had a very different answer this time.

This simple modification helped Carlos to maintain his focus, restored peace to the meeting space, and allowed participant and catechist to feel competent. More important, Carlos, his catechist, and the other young people experienced mutual joy because of the successful modification. The exclusive use of traditional methods to enforce compliance often results in embarrassment for a young person, disruption of the group, and a frustrating sense of failure for the catechist.

It would be an oversimplification to say that a stress ball is the cure for attention issues. For some it works wonders; for others it may have no effect, or it may make things worse. Try having a variety of items on hand for participants to try out. You can include squeeze balls, bean bags, putty, pieces of cloth, and other items that can be grasped.

Many other strategies in addition to tactile strategies can help you enhance the attention of the young adolescents you work with. These include strategies for arranging your meeting space, giving instructions, and helping young people who are distracted bring themselves back into focus.

## **Strategies for Arranging Your Meeting Space**

### **Create Order**

All learners benefit from an organized and clutter-free space. A messy, disorganized space can be a nightmare for young people with attention differences.

### **Be Open to Alternative Seating**

The participants' ability to pay attention is impacted by their seating. Traditional wisdom holds that young people focus better when seated in the front of a meeting space. This is sometimes true, but some do better when seated in the back or on the side. Some maintain focus better when standing or sitting on the floor. Be flexible. Do not require everyone to be seated in the same way. Ultimately, what difference does it make if a participant stands? Let the young people choose the posture that works best for them.

### **Limit Visual Distractions**

Ever sit next to a window in class? Was it hard to keep from looking outside? Positioning the participants to limit their field of vision can reduce distractibility. Use shades or partitions to block out distracting stimuli.



### **Allow Breaks**

Adults take coffee breaks, get up to stretch, or chat by the water cooler. Taking a break helps us to reduce stress and maintain focus. Sometimes breaks are scheduled, but often they are spontaneous responses to stiffness, fatigue, and distraction.

Young people experience these symptoms as well but often do not have the freedom to “disconnect” to refuel, refocus, and refresh themselves. Short, unscheduled breaks can be of benefit to most participants, and are especially important for those with attention issues.

## **Strategies for Giving Instructions**

### **Use Multiple Modes**

Throughout this guide you will read suggestions for expanding the ways you share instructions. You may be asked to write the instructions on the board in addition to speaking them. Sometimes you will be asked to model an activity. These suggestions may seem unnecessary or time consuming, but they will ultimately save you time. By using different styles, you are more likely to reach all the young people the first time, and you will not have to repeat instructions. Some young people focus best by listening, some by watching, and some by doing. Using a variety of communication styles will help you to reach the most learners.

### **Check for Understanding**

Even with these additions, you still may miss some participants the first time. They may not communicate this to you, so it is important that you check for understanding. Use prompts such as, “Who can tell me what we’re going to do next?” Ask several participants until you are satisfied that they all “have it.”

Avoid asking, “Does everyone understand?” Some participants may think they understand when they do not, or they may be embarrassed to share that they don’t understand. Also avoid asking, “Any questions?” Some young people may not realize they “missed it.”

When the participants don’t know what to do, it is important that they are not made to feel embarrassed. When you see hesitation in a young person’s eyes, give him or her an opportunity to ask a peer for help. After the participant chooses another person and that person gives the correct answer, go back to the first young person and ask, “So what are we going to do?” This gives that participant the opportunity to be “correct” and reinforces the instructions.

### **Communicate One Step at a Time**

Young people with attention issues can have difficulty retaining multistep instructions. Communicate steps one at a time, allowing the participants to complete each step before going on to the next, or provide a reference other than memory, such as written instructions on the board or on index cards.

### **Strategies for Helping Young People Who Are Distracted Bring Themselves Back into Focus**

Despite all your efforts and the participants' efforts, some young people may still become distracted from time to time. It is important to gently invite them back into focus. Calling attention to a participant who has become disconnected from the lesson can be embarrassing. Instead use subtle techniques.

#### **Physical Proximity**

Sometimes simply walking close to a participant is enough to reestablish attention. This is a great tool for refocusing young people who are lost in thought or engaged in private conversations. Try to integrate this into your natural movement throughout the meeting space. If the only time you move from the front of the room is when participants are off-task, the young people will quickly see it as a correction rather than a gentle "bringing back."

#### **Special Delivery**

By being aware of items that are helpful for individuals, you can respond to those who have lost focus by gently handing them one of the tactile items described earlier. Your delivering the item can bring the young people back into focus, and their handling the item can help them to maintain focus.

#### **Secret Signals**

Another tool to refocus a participant is using a private signal that is agreed upon in advance by the catechist and the participant. Together choose a special word or phrase that can easily be inserted into conversation, such as, "Think about this." Even when a participant is "a million miles away," an agreed-upon phrase can bring her or him back, similar to speaking her or his name, but without drawing unwanted attention to the participant. The signal can also be an action, such as a hand on the shoulder, a clap, or a snap, all of which can easily be integrated into your normal interaction with the group.

### **Techniques to Avoid**

Any intervention that can draw unwanted attention or embarrass a participant should be avoided. This would include techniques such as the following:

- correcting a participant as if he or she deliberately lost focus: “Susie, pay attention!”
- inserting a participant’s name loudly into an instruction: “Now, JOSEPH, look at the next paragraph.”
- using ill-advised humor by saying things like, “Earth to Johnny!”
- separating friends who get off task together (This may solve the problem of distraction for the rest of the group, but it does nothing to help the participants involved. They need to “practice” staying focused while together, using all the tools at their disposal.)

### **Working in Groups**

When working in groups, young people can lose focus and control of impulsivity. Consider young people in your group who may benefit from doing an activity in a smaller grouping, or even individually. For example, participating in a sharing session in which six participants take turns answering a question may be difficult for young people with attention problems, due to the long listening time. Try forming smaller groups of two or three. Working alone may work well for some young people also. Asking some participants to work alone may seem socially isolating, but repeated failure to focus in a group setting can be even more isolating.

### **Making a Difference as a Catechist**

Imbedded within each of the sessions are more tips and techniques to help you help those who are distractible, hyperactive, and impulsive. Remember that the participants typically are not choosing these behaviors; they want to remain focused and connected to the group. When they aren’t successful, it is not your job to force their compliance. You are a guide, a coach, and a mentor, suspending judgment, being curious, running experiments, and providing many opportunities for practice. This empowering approach will result in better attention and more learning!

# MORAL DECISION MAKING

## Session Overview

In this session the participants will imagine themselves faced with a tough decision and explore their own ways of addressing it. Then through a discussion of everyday tools, they will discover the primary tools or habits for making good decisions: the Cardinal Virtues. After applying the virtues to the tough decision, the participants will use them to determine how they can avoid making bad decisions. In the optional session extension, the participants will look at stories of other people's decisions and discuss how those people could have made better decisions based on the Cardinal Virtues.

## Objectives

Enable the participants to do the following:

- examine their own thought processes when confronted by difficult situations
- recognize that we need the right tools and skills to successfully complete any undertaking, including the task of making good decisions
- discover the Cardinal Virtues as useful tools, or habits, to develop and use for making good decisions

## At a Glance

<b>A. Quick-Start Activity</b>	<b>(5 minutes)</b>
<b>B. Welcome and Opening Prayer</b>	<b>(5 minutes)</b>
<b>C. A Tough Decision</b>	<b>(10 minutes)</b>
<b>D. The Cardinal Virtues</b>	<b>(15 minutes)</b>
<b>E. Putting the Virtues into Practice</b>	<b>(20 minutes)</b>
<b>F. Closing Prayer</b>	<b>(5 minutes)</b>
<b>Optional Session Extension: Straight from the Headlines</b>	<b>(15 minutes)</b>

## Materials and Preparation

### Materials Needed

Gather the following items, one for each participant:

- sheets of lined paper



Gather the following additional items:

- a framed picture
- a hammer
- a nail
- a bottle of glue
- a roll of masking tape

### Preparation Tasks

- Before the participants arrive, write on the board the following question for the quick-start activity: “What are some reasons people make bad decisions?”
- Have the lined paper and pens or pencils available for the participants to pick up as they enter the meeting space.

### Catechist Prayer

Lord, you love us so much that you gave us the ability to choose our own paths. As Catholics we have chosen to follow you, yet we live in a world filled with temptations. We all need your guidance and wisdom to remain faithful to you. Please help me as I lead these young people in discovering and developing ways to make good decisions that will lead them closer to you. Amen.

### Background Reading

- *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*, chapters 32–33
- *CCC*, numbers 1730–1734 (free will); 1803–1811 (the Cardinal Virtues)
- Sirach 15:15 (free will), Wisdom 8:1–8 (the Cardinal Virtues)

## Session Steps

### A. Quick-Start Activity (5 minutes)

1. **Greet** the participants as they enter the meeting space, and invite them to begin the quick-start activity. Point out the following question on the board, but also share it verbally for those who might have trouble referencing the board: “What are some reasons people make bad decisions?”
2. Be sure all the participants have picked up a sheet of lined paper and a pen or pencil, and then ask them to write down as many answers to the question on the board as they can.
3. **Instruct** them to hold on to their lists, as they will need them later in the session.

## B. Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Welcome** everyone and make any announcements.
  2. **Light** a candle, make the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.”
  3. **Invite** a volunteer to read Sirach 15:15.
  4. **Pray** the following:
    - ▶ Lord, as your children, you have lovingly given us the gift of free will, allowing us to choose between good and evil. As young people faced with so many decisions, we humbly ask that you give us the wisdom and strength we need to remain faithful to you. Please guide us today as we seek ways to make decisions that are pleasing to you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
- Close** with the Sign of the Cross.
5. Briefly **explain** that the topic for today’s session is making good decisions.

## C. A Tough Decision (10 minutes)

1. **Introduce** the topic by explaining that we are often faced with tough decisions. **Share** with the participants that through the gift of free will, God gave us the freedom to make good or bad decisions. **Point out** that the passage from the book of Sirach in the opening prayer reminds us that the choice is ours. Tell the young people that they are going to explore a tough decision together.
2. Ask the participants to listen carefully as you **read** aloud the following scenario:
  - ▶ Imagine that you and your friend have been dropped off at the mall for the afternoon. While you are in a store, you realize that your friend has just taken an item off the shelf, hid it in his or her jacket, and is beginning to walk out the door without paying for it. You think the store manager may have seen this, but you are not sure. You must act quickly. What do you do?

After reading this to the group, check for understanding by asking a participant or two to repeat back what is happening in the scenario.

3. **Invite** the participants to take a few moments to silently think about the possible ways they might react to this situation. What is the most likely thing they would do?

4. **Ask** volunteers to share what they would do in this situation. Then ask the group the following questions:
- ▶ What other options came to mind as you thought about the situation?
  - ▶ Did you take other things, like parents or Church, into consideration when deciding? Did they impact your final decision?

**Comment:**

- ▶ There are many possible ways to address this situation, and some are better than others. The options can range from stopping the friend to helping the friend steal the item. Making a tough decision can be confusing. Many things can influence our choices. We need to develop ways, or tools we can use, to approach difficult situations.

**D. The Cardinal Virtues (15 minutes)**

1. **Ask** the participants to define the word *tools* as you write it on the board. The participants should give a definition similar to “something necessary for accomplishing a task.”

2. **Hold up** a framed picture for the young people to see. Show them the hammer, nail, glue, and tape.

**Ask:**

- ▶ If I wanted to hang this picture on the wall, which tools would I use? [*the hammer and the nail*]
- ▶ What would happen if I used the wrong tools, like glue or tape? [*It may work, but not very well.*]

Chapter 32: Living the Moral Life

LIVING THE MORAL LIFE

Faith, hope, and love guide and energize the human virtues. They make our relationships with God and our neighbors more perfect. To learn more about the Theological Virtues, see the article “Theological Virtues.”

Living a moral life is one way we worship God. We become a living sacrifice, along with other members of the Body of Christ. Our celebration of Mass and the nourishment of the Eucharist fuel our efforts to live Christian lives.

**A Did You Know?**

**Cardinal Virtues**

The four Cardinal Virtues are prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.

**Prudence** is good judgment, exercised with caution. It sets the pace for the other virtues. Instead of just rushing into a choice, prudent people think before they act.

**Justice** is all about giving both God and our neighbors what is due to them. It goes beyond just giving our fair share and stretches us to put the needs of others before our own.

**Temperance** means balance and self-control. We like to eat and play, but we can hurt our bodies with too much of either. People may find work to be rewarding or they may enjoy alcohol, but temperance helps us avoid addictions to them.

**Fortitude** gives us the strength to overcome temptations to do wrong, no matter how intense they are. It helps us overcome fears and make sacrifices.

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- ▶ How can practice using a hammer help us? [*We can learn not to hit our thumb or put a hole in the wall.*]
3. **Introduce** the Cardinal Virtues by making the following comments:
- ▶ The same is true for making good decisions: we need the right tools and lots of practice. But unlike the hammer you put away when you are finished, the tools for making good decisions are part of your character and become habits that will develop over time, helping you consistently make good decisions. Today we are going to examine how we can consistently make good decisions by developing four tools, or good habits, called the Cardinal Virtues.
4. **Write** the following across the top of the board: “Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude.” **Explain** the following concepts to the participants in these or similar words (refer to page 379 in *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*):
- ▶ *Prudence* means “to be **cautious**.” In other words, *think first*. This includes obeying your conscience and considering what the Church teaches about your particular choice.
  - ▶ *Justice* means “to be **fair**,” which means we must work to make sure that all people have what they need to live productive lives and that everyone’s God-given dignity is respected and protected.
  - ▶ *Temperance* means “to be **moderate**.” We must keep everything in balance. Too much of a good thing can be bad for us.
  - ▶ *Fortitude* means “to be **courageous**.” Once we know the right decision, we must be brave enough to make it.
- Write** each bold word under its Cardinal Virtue on the board.
5. **Comment:**
- ▶ To consistently make good decisions, we must be cautious, fair, moderate, and courageous.

A

## E. Putting the Virtues into Practice (20 minutes)

1. **Ask** a volunteer to remind the class about what happens in the shoplifting scenario. Then **invite** the participants to apply each Cardinal Virtue—prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude—to the shoplifting story by **asking** the following questions:
- ▶ How could the virtue of *prudence*, being **cautious**, be useful in this situation? [*Stop the friend from leaving the store so you can discuss it. Take into consideration the Church’s teaching: the Seventh Commandment tells us not to steal.*]



- 
- ▶ How could the virtue of *justice*, being **fair**, be useful in this situation? [*Consider the rights of the store owner, who is being robbed, and other shoppers, who pay a higher price to cover the costs of shoplifting.*]
  - ▶ How could the virtue of *temperance*, being **moderate**, be useful in this situation? [*Being moderate means not selfishly desiring more than we truly need. Remind your friend that the item is not something she or he really needs.*]
  - ▶ How could the virtue of *fortitude*, being **courageous**, be useful in this situation? [*It will take courage to stand up to a friend.*]

2. **Divide** the large group into pairs. **Ask** the pairs to share their lists of reasons people make bad decisions from the quick-start activity. Encourage them to add to their lists any other reasons they can think of.
3. **Instruct** the pairs to discuss how each reason on their lists can be overcome by one or more of the Cardinal Virtues, and next to each reason write down the virtue(s) they chose.
4. **Ask** the participants to take out their handbooks. When all are ready, have them read silently the “Did You Know?” sidebar on page 379 for more information on the Cardinal Virtues.
5. **Invite** each pair to present its list and explain how each reason for making a bad decision is addressed by one or more of the Cardinal Virtues.
6. **Conclude** by highlighting how the Cardinal Virtues can be used to address a situation or help prevent making a bad decision. We just need to remember to be cautious, fair, moderate, and courageous.

**A**

### F. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

**B**

1. **Ask** the participants to take out their handbooks. When all are ready, **invite** them to turn to page 371.
2. **Ask** for a volunteer to read the prayer in the “Pray It!” sidebar.
3. **Invite** everyone to offer up areas in their lives where they particularly want strength to make good decisions. Begin with an appropriate example from your life. If the young people are uncomfortable sharing aloud, they can do this in silence.